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Collector- Object-Researcher

An Historiographical Study of the Performativity of Archival Research

COLLECTOR- OBJECT-RESEARCHER: AN HISTORIOGRAPHICAL STUDY OF THE PERFORMATIVITY OF ARCHIVAL RESEARCH

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Abstract

Within the realm of archival historiography, this thesis considers the performative reciprocity in the relationship between the archive collector, their collected materials and the researcher who studies them.

By looking at the narrative subjectivity with which archive collections are artistically created, how the collected materials communicate personal and cultural contexts and how researchers receive this information within their own circumstantial frameworks of perception an indication of the complex palimpsest of performativity that exists within archival research becomes apparent.

A practical methodology is employed to investigate: the moments of encounter, material linguistics and autobiographical subjectivity involved in archival research, across the analytical triumvirate of collector – object – researcher.

This process leads to a distinctive historiography that considers phenomenologies of perception, haptic engagement with material and the cultural meaning-making that can subsequently be read from these interactions. This outcome suggests new and different ways of thinking curatorially with display, exhibition and museology as the theatre for performative historical re-enactment with objects.

By investigating five collections with differing collecting approaches, styles and drives from the University of Bristol Theatre Collection, this study closely considers what performance studies can do for paper-based and three-dimensional archival historiography in terms of using potential tools and media and continuing to challenge the disciplinary exclusivities of the University, Theatre and Museum.

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A special thanks to my father Robert Johns, I would like to express my gratitude for your endless backing and assistance throughout my academic career to date and to the rest of the Johnses who have sustained me in my writing and incented me to continue to strive towards my goal.

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Author's Declaration

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the University's Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award. Except where indicated by specific reference in the text, the work is the candidate's own work. Work done in collaboration with, or with the assistance of others is indicated as such. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

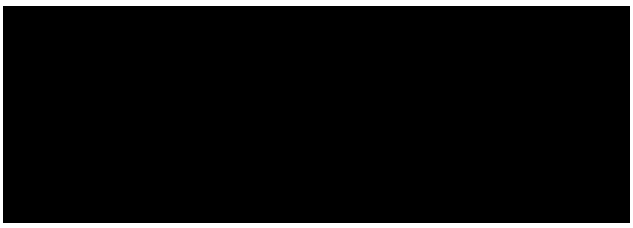

Table of Contents

List of Illustrations

in the television series, *Dad's Army*.

Fig 18. Programme for Miss Horniman's Company production of George Bernard Shaw's *Candida* and *Cupid in the Styx* by J. Sackville Martin, with Marie Scharning listed as 'Advanced Representative', 1910.

Fig 19. (From left to right) Sylvia Grey, Miss Annie Halford, Ellen Terry as Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing*

Fig 20. Miss Constance Gilchrist (top left), Miss Calhoun (top right), Madame Georgina Burns (bottom left), Lilian Langtry (bottom right).

Fig 21. Copy of letter, dated 1937, from Macnamara to The Institute of Deaconesses, Kaiserswerth-am-Rhein, requesting information about how a deaconess from around 1867 should dress, a reply letter from Deaconess Mathilde Pots with a photograph print of a typical deaconesses uniform for travelling.

Fig 22. Clockwise from above: *The Times*, review of *Women of Twilight* at the Embassy Theatre, 1951. *Evening Standard* review of *Women of Twilight*, 1951. *Picturegoer*, June 1952, review of film production of *Women of Twilight* by Sylvia Rayman. *The Mail* review of *Women of Twilight*, 1951.

Fig 23. Maud's diary from 1922 depicting her list of demands that she makes upon herself.

Fig 24. Letter from Philip Burne-Jones, artist and the son of poet Edward Burne-Jones, October 2nd 1896, mentioning a dispute between Lawrence Alma Tadema (famous Dutch painter who produced theatre and costume designs) and Mrs. Carr about a Cymbeline Production they were both involved in. He also mentions the building/refurbishment of Her Majesty's for which Herbert Beerbohm Tree was to become Actor-Manager.

Fig 25. Sunday January 24th – 25th 1891 – "Mr Irving comes to see me – sits by my bed. Could I have foreseen this 10 years ago!! He is sweet and kind and I do care to see him – but Oh! 10 years ago! […] Dear Morphia!" Maud suffered from rheumatism and was often bedridden in the winter months.

Fig 26. Letter from Winston Churchill, 26th August 1898: "My dear Mrs. Tree, an officer gave me this morning the volumes of Shakespeare which you and Lady Gransby so admirably selected and bestowed. They are splendid and I shall look forward to using them while I am in this world. It is, for the moment a little doubtful what will be the length of that epoch for we move up the Nile tomorrow and all the fighting in the neighbourhood of Omdurman will be ended in a short time. I am confident that there will be an important engagement – perhaps even an historic one. You will recollect that I engaged to pen two separate letters I have endeavoured to do so yet both must end in my sincere thanks for a delightful souvenir and delightful people. Yours very sincerely, Winston S. Churchill."

Fig 27. Letter from Philip Burne-Jones about Maud's poetry recital July 7th 1897 with a sketch of Maud in performance: "My dear Mrs. Tree, I must send you a line to say how perfectly <u>lovely</u> it was of you to recite that little poem so beautifully last evening. I think you must have realized everyone appreciated you! Madame Blumenthal was enraptured – and so was everyone else. I looked round for you everywhere later on to say 'thank you' once more and to tell you how superbly you had spoken the lines – but there was no you – you had just come like a beautiful vision, done your deed of mercy and departed through the night! People everywhere were saying how beautiful you were and how wonderfully you had recited the verses. It was a <u>great</u> success. Till our next merry meeting, yours always gratefully. Phil Burnes-Jones."

PREFACE

All images presented in this thesis have been shared by kind permission of the University of Bristol Theatre Collection

Fig.1 Festival of Desperation Exhibition, 2010. Richie Smith as a 'Pipe Person' in original 1990s costume.

This thesis explores how an evaluation of the historian's own performative practices in archival research aligns them with the figure of the collector in the ritualized writing of history with collated objects. This approach can enhance the reading of potential humanist histories through collection materials. The inspiration came from working for some time on the formation, curation and management of the Desperate Men street theatre company archive in 2010. I began work with this group as a volunteer with the University of Bristol Theatre Collection. The company's archive was being moved to storage at the Theatre Collection and it was my task (along with Archive Keeper, Heather Romaine) to interview the company members about how they wished their 30 year's worth of collected ephemera to be sorted, labelled and boxed prior to cataloguing. After this transfer was completed, I conducted an oral history interview with one of the founders of the Desperate Men Collection, Richie Smith, which was then committed to their closed, uncatalogued archive. Subsequent to this volunteer work with the UoBTC (I will use this acronym for clarity from here on) I was asked to work directly for the Desperate Men in curating an exhibition to commemorate their 30 years as a Theatre Company, which

formed part of their own 'Festival of Desperation' in 2010; a city wide day of celebrations for the company's birthday and the performance work of their Bristol artists and collaborators.

As a case study the Desperate Men Collection is quite particular to a living group of collectors. The collectors are all alive, all their collaborators are alive and they are still producing work today. There is therefore existing access to anecdote and memory from people involved. Every item in the collection meant something to the Desperate Men's own writing of the compartmentalised history of the first 30 years of their theatre company. Through my archiving work, I had a comprehension of who the collectors were, what they wanted of the archive, what they did, how they did it and why they kept what they did. I explored my personal comprehension of their history in the curating of the exhibition based on what they wanted to show and if I got an opportunity to catalogue the material I would also be imprinting my own experience onto the documentary outcome, whether I liked it or not. I had spent some time talking casually and socialising with the collectors as I interviewed them and on a personal level, I politically and aesthetically enjoyed the ethos and design of their work so there is no doubt my response to their work was then to be somewhat emotionally invested. However, I was also being paid for my work, which meant that despite my long involvement with the forming of the narrative of their archive collection through archiving and exhibition, I had a duty of care to the company and duty of practice to the Theatre Collection.

It was impossible then not to apply an objective contribution to the collection as a paid worker but I was also making decisions that were based on my understanding of what the theatre company wanted to tell of their self-penned story. This agenda for the archive therefore became entrenched in the document that is the oral history. The interview was a long three hours, I had had training on how to present an oral history interview and all the advice pointed towards not having a previous agenda on what to find out, and to ask spontaneous questions in response to what was being said. Despite being asked lateral and non-linear questions about context and circumstance, Richie answered the questions in a chronicled time-line, going back to previously asked questions in order to fill in the gaps of his own reflections. The interview took on a fractious quality as Richie displayed his anxiety to record everything, not to miss anything out. The training also suggested that we steer clear of emotionally charged or personal questions but that if they seemed relevant to ask them with great subtlety. I began to ask questions that may instigate a response that was more socially and politically

illuminating, ones that might cause a reflection on the finer details of the effect of circumstance on the very collaborative nature of their work. This action could now be seen as manipulative to the outcome of the story being told and ultimately on the history left behind within the oral history document. The process taught me that in order to glean fully rounded histories one must have some understanding of the collector's personal and cultural context in order to form a more complex and unflinching view of the lived experiences behind archive collections and their chosen objects. It also made me aware of the difficulty of avoiding autobiography (that of the collector and the researcher) in the forming of any history, however neutral one tries to be as an historian, through whatever narrative medium; be that a chronicle, exhibition, journal, book, conference paper it is all "history writing"[1]

There is a natural duality of self and other, fantasy and fact, practice and theory, private and public in both the researcher's reading of objects for history writing from archival materials and by the collectors in their collecting for these resources. Recognition of this cross-comparative relationship and duality of existence of the researcher and of the collector can familiarise historical researchers with the connect between these two narrative figures, intimating the humanist (I use this term to represent having to do with the human condition socially and ontologically) nature of our studies and thus the importance of nurturing it in the dissemination of outcomes. An in depth study of the collector and the potential reasons behind their personal choice of objects in collecting can help to glean what is there, why it is there, how it is there and the subjective impulses behind the object's presence from the collector's perspective. From one subject's perspective we can comprehend the contextual circumstances that may have inspired these choices, illuminating human stories of performance and theatre past: the premise being that the context informs the object (forwards in time) and the object informs us of the context (backwards in time) simultaneously.

This practical experience of collections, collectors, objects and archival research was further developed by my MA Performance Research dissertation based on the personal collection of Berta Freistadt. The posthumous bequest of the recently deceased Berta Freistadt had recently been accessioned to the Women's Theatre Collection at the UoBTC. Like many personal collections, the objects it contained appeared as if that they were

[1] Steedman, Carolyn (2001) p.29

imbued with parts of her personality, parts of her experiences, parts of her agenda, parts of her politics and social understandings, her historical understandings and interests. An informed level of sensitivity needed to be engaged with in the treatment of this collection as Freistadt's friends and some family outlive her. Whatever I perceived of Berta Fresitadt was my own imaginative vision of the collector, an abstraction based on my personal encounter with the objects she left behind. The prior knowledge of the story of Freistadt having planned the bequest before her recent death as well as funding for the collection's cataloguing and keeping naturally bore emotional weight due to its recentness. Already this was turning out to be a very different treatment of objects for me as, unlike the Desperate Men Collection, this was the last word from Freistadt meaning her historical ideologies would have to be borne out in what remained of the collection materials she herself collated.

The collection was a personal enterprise of Freistadt's thirty years of involvement in women's, lesbian's and black women's theatre in London and it seemed clear that this is the story she wanted to tell. There were no other referents to glean from as Berta was an unpublished playwright (although a couple of her short novels are in print) who had left all of her documentation of her life and work to this collection, from her involvement in the British Drama League as a teenager in the 1950s, to her personal love letters in the 1990s. Berta was suffering with breast cancer for some time and had made a very conscious decision to self-archive, leaving all her records to this collection. The conclusion was reached to allow this to speak for her as it was. A functional and strategic look at the accession records for this collection helped to ground my perception in cold, hard facts, or what we had left of them. Despite this, I found it increasingly difficult to steer away from Freistadt's own apparent objective. It therefore became fitting that I would explore the character of the collector through an understanding of what her agenda for the educational use of this collection was likely to be based on the materiality of what lay before me in boxes and nothing else. This led to a rich and expansive contextual journey and shed exceptional light on the significance of the objects it contained.

The intersection between archive and memorialization was intensified by an invitation to represent the University of Bristol Theatre Collection at Freistadt's friends' memorial service for her life and work. Engaging in this very emotional event as a professional, particularly as I was writing about her work from the personal items she had left to the UoBTC, made it almost impossible to remain impartial and objective. Many may

argue that this lacks necessary neutrality, yet this experience led me to believe it is also worth disclosing the potentially manipulative effects that a feeling of affinity with your subject of study might have on your subsequent emotional investment in history writing. Like me, Freistadt was a Londoner, with feminist and a queer political and social aesthetic working in theatre and performance. Does/did this make it more difficult to rein in potentially biased, limiting or one dimensional readings of collections? Should we be more aware of this potentiality in our dissemination of histories through archival curation, exhibition or text? This concern was prompted by the objectification that I have always been told is essential to historical research and dissemination. At the exhibition opening, Berta's friends and colleagues shared anecdotes with other visitors that served to flesh out the once vital objects that sat static in cabinets or framed on the walls: a reminder of the ever increasing mutability of histories that remain loyal to the personal humanity behind stories of the past. One woman looked at one of Berta's collected scrapbooks that was laid out with hard prints of photographs from the early 1990s and pointed out who the other people in the rehearsal process were, what the original performance was like and how Berta struggled to bring the organisation of an underfunded production together. Another gestured to a flyer for one of her earliest works of her own writing and recalled her joy at the chaotic nature of the performance that added more to the comedy. They both recalled a sort of glory in the pursuit of feminist fairytales being used in performance to tell controversial but necessary stories to audiences in a time of low funding for independent arts. More specifically, they remembered the influence of a fear of the passing of Clause 28 through parliament which would have resulted in further funding cuts for queer and feminist arts through a now long defunct GLC (Greater London Council). In one conversation a whole socio-political and artistic movement in history was subjectively, yet relevantly embodied for those that did not have that connection. The objects became even more fully informed by the 'spirit' of the collector made present by anecdotal remembrance.

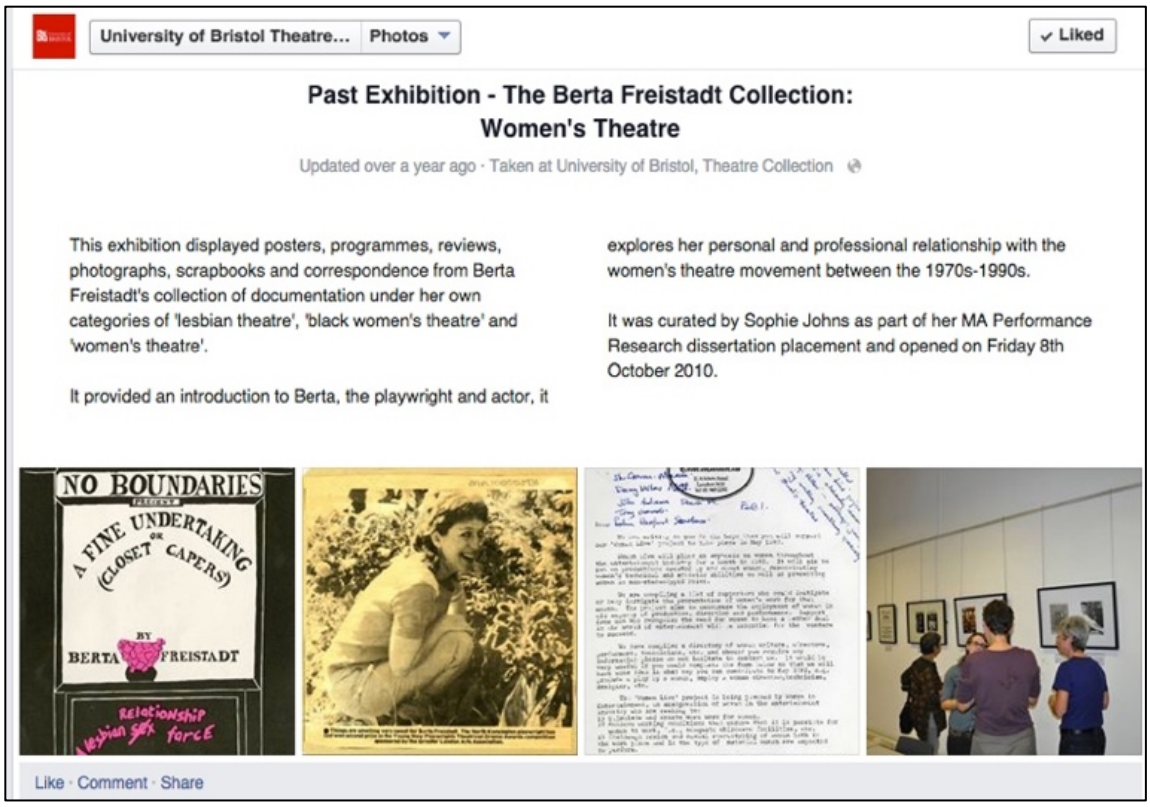

Fig 2. The Theatre Collection's Facebook page for the Berta Freistadt exhibition, 2010.

Fig. 3 Berta Freistadt Exhibition Opening at the University of Bristol Theatre Collection, 2010. Friends of Berta, Friends of the Theatre Collection, staff, students and outside visitors within the main exhibition space.

These projects laid the ground work for this thesis. They brought light to and defined its research questions presenting an interesting and under-considered approach to experimenting with archival research. The prominent effect of reflecting on the particular agendas involved in both the collector and the researcher's endeavour to create histories through objects presented itself as a fundamental way to access broader contexts for history writing. Allowing historical research to be guided by the exploration of this specific data requires the acceptance of the importance of anecdote, corporeal response to objects and the play with narrative from collector to researcher. This concept formed the practical foundation for my research methodology to experiment with this. An object's specificity and its pertinence in a comprehension of the mechanics of archiving and subsequent histories should not be underestimated. Neither should the humanism of the connection betweent the individuals of the collectors and researchers in history writing. The phenomenology of physically turning objects over in one's hands to engage the senses and the emotions and the intellect of the individual and the nurturing of the anecdotal response to the stimuli of objects collated for posterity are central to the theory that has been developed in this project. It is accepted that this comprehension of contextual circumstances is a process that many, if not all, historians go through in archival research. However, not all nurture this experience and identify it subjectively in their output. Neither do they compare a series of collections for the varying kinds of subjectivity that are involved in the collecting process that can affect our historiographical results. Not all historians include the evaluation of the performative rituals of their own practice in line with that of the collector in their work or comprehend the importance of these approaches as a cross disciplinary model for research that is afforded by the critical and theoretical study of performance specifically.

CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION TO COLLECTOR-OBJECT-RESEARCHER TRIANGULATION

> If the collection and the interpretation of historical evidence are inseparable processes, then the conclusions that are drawn are equally dependent on the evidence and the historian. There are two obvious reasons why we cannot limit history to the accurate presentation of data. In the first place, almost by definition, historical data can provide only indirect and incomplete information concerning the past; the most logically rigorous analysis of fragmentary evidence can yield results that are wrong. In the second place, even the most 'scientific' of historians bring to their data assumed patterns of meaning. Moreover, logical reasoning is only one of several attributes that scholars bring to bear. Glynne Wickham refers, for example, to 'the necessity of resorting to the imagination, to a process of the spirit rather than of the intellect, at its cheapest a guess, at its best a vision'[2]

The thesis seeks to foreground the performativity of the archival process interrogating the discursive elements in the triangulatory practices between the collector, the researcher and archived materials, considering the connection between the collector, the researcher and the objects of archival study as an indicator of the significance of anecdote, biography and subjectivity as a historiographical tools in creating diversified histories. Diversification refers to nuanced, personal and individual histories that avoid prescription and include mixed and marginalized voices on cultural heritage. The argument of this thesis is that when embarking on historical research in theatre and performance archives, illuminating the collector and their work as a person as a key historical source of information would be critically, practically and disciplinarily advantageous as these are figures in time who they imbue the objects present with personal experiences. It explores the collector's personal and subjective choices in the collation of objects for historical study and how the performance of the researcher comes to mirror this process concentrating on how a comprehension of this often-overlooked area of source information during historical research helps the researcher to reflect upon the layers of performativity that are employed in the writing of history through and within archives. Above all, this thesis foregrounds how by appealing to the nuances in human social interaction, discourse and condition, archival research can incite wider access to materials, broader and more varied historical responses, encouraging creativity giving voice to new and forgotten comprehensions of times, events and people involved in theatre and performance past. Aligning collectors with performing similar practices, this thesis focuses on the

[2] Vince, R.W. (1989) *Theatre History as an Academic Disicpline*, p.49

potential of a phenomenological relationship between the two figures of collector and researcher in time and space as they perform two sides of what is endeavoring to be a whole action towards historical posterity and storytelling. This thesis analyses five examples of collecting practices from the University of Bristol Theatre Collection within a number of critical and theoretical frameworks taken from academic disciplines and investigates what a comprehension of their differing styles, motives and drives can do for future histories.

This methodological focus is on collections at the University of Bristol Theatre Collection that represent five different kinds of collecting processes, namely: Business, Personal, Artificial, Academic and Family collections. I examine these differing approaches in order to highlight the figure of the collector/s as individuals to demonstrate how a comprehension of the circumstantial context of the collector/s can help us imagine the human choices behind objects left for us as researchers.

Firstly, I explored the Desperate Men Theatre Company, a Bristol based street theatre organization who are still making work and for whom I had help collate, box, label and exhibit their archive collection to commemorate their 30 years as a company in 2010. They began collecting in 1980 when they began as a company and are still adding to their currently closed archive. It is now part of the University of Bristol Theatre Collection, an example of a business collection in this thesis.

Alongside this, I looked at Eric Jones Evans Collection as an example of a personal theatre collection based on his long career and love affair with theatre and his subsequent bequest to the University of Bristol Theatre Collection as a good friend of its founder, Glynne Wickham. Jones Evans collected ephemera from childhood around the turn of the twentieth century and committed his collection to Bristol Theatre Collection in the 1970s.

I then investigated, The Women's Theatre Collection which was an artificially set up theme based collation of artefacts to aid academic study on the subject in a broad context. It was set up in 1992 and is still an open working archive. It also highlights unproduced or unpublished works of women in theatre

and individual experiences of women in theatre.

This thesis also makes use of Arnold Ridley's Academic collection, a father son endeavor that documents Ridley's life and work in theatre, the basis for which became for educational use in what was then the Drama School but is now the University of Bristol Theatre and performance department. Ridley collected ephemera from 1930s until his death when his son Nicholas submitted his collection to the archive in 2006 along with his own additions of material.

Finally, the thesis explores the family collection of the Beerbohm Tree's; often used for research but the stories extracted are predominantly for research on Herbert Beerbohm Tree himself despite its objects lending context on the entire family's experiences of theatre, and, in particular detail, Maud Tree. The material spans from 1880s to Maud's death in 1930s.

I wanted to use these examples in the thesis as a way of highlighting both the individual impulse and the choices to collect and the style of collecting practice that takes place as a way of demonstrating how the stories behind the material are affected by access to this knowledge as a researcher.

Styles, Acts and Aesthetics of Collecting

There is a notable scarcity in the academic, scholarly and critical evaluation of the human context and circumstance under which objects are collected for historical documentation. Bringing together perspectives from literary and cultural theories, and ideas from my own discipline of performance studies, the thesis aims to highlight how historians can foreground this layer of information that seems to be missing as a key means of understanding more about how the *practices* of collecting can inform histories. Whether the collected objects are consciously or unconsciously imbued with human context, we have the opportunity as researchers to read archival material for just how 'performative'[3] it is and in what ways; what reasons does the collector have for their choices? For clarity, Rebecca Schneider

[3] Schneider, Rebecca (2001) p.29

outlines the anxiety around the increased use of the word "performativity", as coined by Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble,* for levels of performance:

> Conscious performance and ritual acts veil or blind, 'conceal' their dependence on the profound conventionality of discursive performance, ritual and theatricality is consciously embodied, performatives are discursive and somehow unconscious. They are not willed, but blindly participate in that great stream of repetition by which any word is both ghosted by a historicity not completely accessible to it and is uncertain of its future to a degree that is always in excess of any fully conscious manipulation.[4]

I use the term in the sense of the conscious and 'unconscious' reproduction of cultural behaviours and the re-staging of a semi-awareness of conventional and cultural meanings of representative signs: both discursively and expressively, cognitive ways of materially displaying meaning. The collector's agenda and identity is communicated through their personal choices for function, use and aesthetic of objects committed to archive. To observe the narrative thinking behind a collection is to identify who used their own creative imagination to form it and why. Authorial intention (in this case the collector's but we will also explore the researcher's) is particularly helpful in deducing the fine details of what collections can impart to us both as historical resources and art forms. Comprehending the part (objects) amongst the whole (collection) demonstrates for the researcher the appropriately theatrical performance of a life and work with and love for/of objects.[5] The thesis will discuss in finer detail the way in which the collector narrates the life-cycle of objects through collection and dissemination reflecting upon the theatrical and performative ontology of archival material and interaction. I will refer to objects in relation to material, visual and cultural theory but it should be made clear that once the objects are collected and opened out

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[4] Ibid.

[5] For clarity on terms used in this thesis, here is a glossary:

Item: An individual part or unit, especially one that is part of a list, collection or set.
- Something itemised, categorised, listed.
- Record.

Object: A thing external to the thinking mind or subject
- Material thing
- The thing you hit when ideas extend themselves – the palpable end.

Artefact: An object made by a human being physically and implied theoretically
- Something observed or analysed
- Subject to investigation.

Thing: An inanimate material object as distinct from a living sentient being.

Material: Denoting or consisting of physical objects rather than the mind or spirit.

Document:
- To record something (time, place, action, idea) – Verb/action.
- A material piece of information or evidence that serves as record – Noun/thing.

to the public through archival institutions they are itemized and so in broad approach become material and in isolation become items.

The Collector-Object-Researcher Triangulation

This "connect", to exchange, transfer, associate or relate between collector and researcher through archival material, may be a metaphysical concept of the imagination, since the collector is not present but for what remains of them in the objects they have chosen, they are ghosts[6]. Any perception of a relation between the collector and the researcher in the moment of encounter in the archive is embracing what Bromfield and Cavanagh call "the mythopoetic nature of history"[7] or perhaps Wickham's meaning of the "spirit" of the archive[8] that opened this first chapter. Nevertheless, the practical process that both of these figures across space and time engender for the sake of history are the same: the collector begins by being interested in a subject, they acquire an object to commemorate it and they file them in amongst other things of similar interest, then they submit their collection to an archive where, of course, the material becomes catalogued items for outside visitors' perusal. The researcher also begins interested in a subject, they find the object of significance in the collection and they analyse them amongst other things of similar relevance, then they commit their findings to "historical writing"[9]. One's presence in the archive with a box of items begins the process of mirroring the collector's pursuit. I have investigated this idea throughout the following chapters through the conception of a triangulation model:

[6] Freshwater, Helen (2003) p.730.
[7] Bromfield and Cavanagh (2009) p. 6.
[8] Wickham, Glynne in Vince, R.W. (1989) p.49
[9] Steedman, Carolyn (2001) p.9

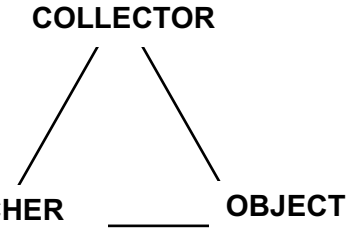

Fig. 4

In the context of this thesis for example, the collector may be Eric Jones Evans, the object, his make-up box and the researcher, me and the phenomenological relationship between the three elements in creative dissemination of ideas. It is a social and relational phenomenology, whereby we "intend" or "conjure" up what we perceive of objects in the present, but also the histories out of which objects emerge[10]. Identity and context is tied up in this social and relational encounter between collector-object-researcher the success of which may lie in what Bal calls a "subjectivised history"[11], one where the autobiography is a central and conscious component effect, is built on both "logical reasoning" and "imagination"[12]. The personal and circumstantial contexts of objects can remind us just how important the challenge is that Vince and Wickham put forward for the spirit of imagination. Not only does a reliance on an object's personal, operative provenance give full functional articulation to objects in their manifestations as historical artefacts, but it also gives voice to potentially forgotten or omitted histories through the investigation of the human life, work and character behind them.

The University of Bristol Theatre Collection among others can provide the flesh and bones to research into the theatrical past. The things bestowed to an archive are often the most significantly evidential sources available for research. The stories of the individuals who provided them for us should be treated with the same scholarly credence for the disciplines of historiography. This thesis aims to remind us just how pertinent, enlightening and enriching a comprehension of the human side to the presence of objects in archives can be for historical narratives. Firstly, the meaning and ontology of the collected

[10] Ahmed, Sara (2006) p.152
[11] Bal, Meike (2009) in Candlin and Guins, p.102
[12] Vince, R.W. (1989) p.49

material in archives must be addressed for all its economic, political and cultural context in order to produce fully examined theatrical and performance histories. Secondly, the researcher should do their part in self-reflecting on their own encounters with objects in archival research: what their perceived meanings suggest about their experience in the world and how a knowledge of this may be affecting one's findings. An example of how this has been done successfully in publication is through Barbara Hodgdon's 2016 book, *Shakespeare, Performance and the Archive* in which she references not only her own collecting practices, uses her own collection and theorises upon Shakespeare's works in performance, but uses anecdotes from her past and present experiences with the materials in the telling of her historical and theoretical narrative:

> The promptscript's markings reveal little or nothing about the form and pressure of what I remember as McKellan's crisp, staccato delivery-almost a monotone. All that appears is that speaking a particular word keys sound and/or light cues; otherwise, the moment belongs to the actor, who shapes the words at will. As Derrida suggest, if one finds nothing but whit space, that absence is not *nothing* but rather the space left by what has disappeared: the very emptiness constitutes a sign of how, in performance, the space was once filled and animated.[13]

All three figures in the triangulation in time and space perform cultural being-in-the-world in this instant of encounter and historical theorization and exchange and allow a full and new perspective as part of their disseminated argument.

Having been part of projects in the University of Bristol Theatre Collection both as a volunteer and for previous Postgraduate study and assessment, it became clear to me the level of agency the collector has over their own idealised stories when they bequeath their collections to archives. Collectors create objects by collating them with other objects, box them, record and file them into narratives. Meanings are extracted from, impressed upon, quieted within materials, they are changed by the collector's and researcher's choice to use them for their own historiographical agenda. Collectors and researchers are artists, authors, historians and curators in these acts. They pay for the upkeep and cataloguing, advise on the use and even include their own notation for their work. Many are still open to addition. The

[13] Hodgdon, Barbara (2016) p.13

collector's intent for their boxes of ephemera to be seen, to be heard and to be remembered is ever present, even candid. Researchers often fail to comprehend the human provenance of the objects that are left behind for them. For researchers to recognise and draw awareness to this contextual gold mine, object by object, it is complex and personal. Historians may identify the name, type, date and manufacturing origin of an object for chronicling purposes and cultural heritage but often neglect its post-production use and function, which is inextricably permeated with emotional and personal resonance. Barbara Hodgdon shows us in her reflections in *Shakespeare, Performance and the Archive* what can be achieved if historians and researchers adopt the collector's candour by incorporating the personal into their archival research findings. She discusses with passionate abandon her relation to objects in her own and other collections and others of how photographs of rehearsal processes for stage productions have inspired her to think and reflect on the experiences not only of the performers but of the directors, the documenters (photographers) the onlookers to these photographs and the subsequent comprehension of how these human conditions for experience can be imparted in the live production of the pieces for further audiences. Using a dreamlike interpretation of memory in the pursuit of historical information, critical analysis and dissemination of ideas[14], Hodgdon's work is an example I wish to pursue as her emotional candour opens up interpretation and might encourage others to explore forgotten and marginal histories from her personalised perspectives.

In the act of collecting materials as historical data, whether for leisure, social interaction, research, posterity or any of the many other reasons that this thesis goes on to explore in chapter 2; collectors do so as individuals. Similarly, researchers and historians approach archival material as individuals and are all responsible for an inevitable lack of circumscription. Within historical theory production anxiety for the duty to truth, reality and evidence runs deep. When the scarcity and or age of primary documentation on a chosen subject prohibits one from reaching a fully quantitative conclusion the outcome must be to remind them that it is not technically possible to achieve even if one had a continuous string of representative objects available. Harvey-Brown and Davis-Brown tell us: "it is not

[14] Hodgdon, Barbara (2016) p.14

that archivists do not tell the whole truth about reality. It is that they *cannot* tell it".[15] In order to experiment with applying these theoretical suggestions, I turned to the archive I knew best and that Wickham founded himself, the University of Bristol Theatre Collection, for my primary source and case study.

Many close studies in museology, the archive and collections have been made in recent years, studies that focus on a collector or collection in detail. Rosemary Matthews' "Isabella Stewart Gardner and her Museum of Art: Collectors and Why They Collect"[16] (2009) and Ellen Adams' 2013 comparative study, "Shaping, collecting and displaying medicine and architecture: A comparison of the Hunterian and Soane Museums"[17] are two strong examples influenced by many of the works on museums, objects and archive collecting by Susan Pearce in the 1990s. This trend indicates an interest in collections has not disappeared. Rather, there is a fanatical approach to autobiography of collectors. Eve Smith's Phd thesis submission is one notable example of research that is focusing down on the individual collector as historical resource and inspiring discussion of those who collect and what they stand for as well as how they influence our comprehension of the objects at our disposal as historical researchers in theatre archives.[18] Yet, there is scarcely any evaluation of differing styles in archive collecting and how this can translate to the experiences of the researcher in their beholding of collected objects particularly in relation to the performance practice of collecting, objects and research individually. This key means of understanding seems neglected somewhat in current thinking and discussion on archival, theatre and performance history studies. This thesis aims to go some way towards excavating the commonly neglected reflection on the *practices* of collecting as a means of informing future histories.

A Performative Historiography for Theatre and Performance Studies

The theories, concepts and phenomenologies rooted in the discourse of theatre and performance studies inspire a focus on the acts, practices and processes of both collectors and researchers in forming

[15] Harvey Brown, Richard and Beth Davis-Brown, (1998) p.22
[16] Matthews, Rosemary (2009)
[17] Adams, Ellen (2013)
[18] Smith, Eve (2016)

histories. This has led me to apply questions of performativity to the acts of both collectors and researchers who themselves determine the performance of objects. This helps to centre the thesis on how we personally and collectively receive information from archival collection objects using the body, movement, semiotics and memory to then creatively and imaginatively narrate histories either into collections or into written or exhibited stories as researchers/historians. Mathias Danbolt refers to a performative historiography as inevitable in a practice that is focused around the body's interaction with materials: "This entails paying attention to the touching that takes place in our physical and mental labor of doing historical and archival work – searching, digging, reading, writing, desiring, breaking, and shaking things – as well as maintaining an awareness of the experiences of how history touches us in the present."[19]

In accordance with Danbolt's definition and defense of a performative historiography, the investigation of the thesis looks into the possible personal and cultural reasons, intentions and outcomes of the collector in their collecting process and thus what they leave for us as historical resources to touch and be touched by. The methodological discourses that have allowed me to elaborate on this subject from a practical perspective, thus tethering the more metaphysical ideas to rigorously scholarly tested processes, involve object-based learning, performance theory, university archiving, museology and visual and material culture to offer theoretical responses to questions of our relationship with objects in time and space. A combination of these studies can offer reflections on the agency and access to histories that can be achieved through an awareness and analysis of how we engage our senses in the reception of materials in archival research.

Encounter and Beholding Material

The thesis proposes that the premise of comprehending a performative historiography is to foreground the moment of 'encounter'. What is it to have the freedom in space and time to 'be with' archived collection items? Digital transfer has allowed us to be distant from objects, we can document the record

[19] Danbolt, Mathias (2013) "The Trouble With Straight Time" in Borgreen, Gunhild and Rune Gade (eds) *Performing Archives/Archives of Performance*. p.460

that the three-dimensional object offers us and view it online from across the world. But what is the benefit of physically beholding an object of interest? The timeliness of this thesis is that it sets out re-introduce more radical ideas of encounter using movement and physical creativity within institutional environments to highlight what digital transfer cannot offer as a source of historical evidence. Together, these approaches appeal to concepts of the self in storytelling and the body in the imagination of history, serving inclusivity and thus potentially creating diversity of outcomes. The objective is to offer vitality to the archive's potential to engage with extensive and differing researchers, a focus on the corporeal as well as the intellectual performance with objects is likely to offer us a forward-looking, cross-disciplinary and humanist response to archival research. As Heike Roms reminds us, the archive does not have to represent the past only, we can be present with it and generate new future ideas of it in recapitulating the details of our encounter with it: "Instead of lamenting performance's inevitable 'pastness', the archive encourages us to explore performance's continuing presence in our encounter with these ideas."[20]

The basic process of the researcher's or historian's encounter with objects is to perceive, interpret and experience the next motion is then to conceptualise and disseminate what one has read. In the rendering of narratives from encounters with objects into exhibitions, theses, papers or books the historian or researcher generates their own collection: they isolate, interpret and document their practice for posterity. The importance of the act of encounter is again, a phenomenological one, as beholding is the instantaneous response and the subsequent analysis of our encounter with objects: it is momentary and ephemeral but can be analysed and re-enacted. Sara Ahmed puts it thus, "At least two entities have to arrive to create an encounter, a 'bringing forth' in the sense of an occupation."[21]. Ahmed is referencing the encounter between subject and object here and how they identify one another in the moment of "arrival"[22] into each other's world, they "occupy" one another. Of course, our ideas and responses will change from one mind's encounter to another's as we bring new knowledge and understanding to our

[20] Heike Roms (2013) "Archiving Legacies: Who Cares for Perfromance Remains" in Borggreen, Gunhild and Rune Gade (eds) *Performing Archives/Archives of Performance.* p.37
[21] Ahmed, Sara (2006) p.39
[22] Ibid

personal association with objects, our "orientation"[23]. In fact, this is reminiscent of the ontology of theatrical performance in and of itself. In a mirror image of the researcher's performance, the collector embarks on forming a collection, whether it is a business, personal, artificial, academic or family style of approach, their reasons for selecting items for posterity are foregrounded in what is there and what is not there. Objects and the gaps between them are imbued then with personal meaning. Can autobiographical candour be a useful premise in the historians' writing of history? The sharing of one's encounter in its rawest form? If so, why do we omit from archival research findings our own moment of impact: the encounter; the association we project onto our comprehension of objects from our own life and work? By outlining and layering our responses to stimuli like this, essentially, we are documenting (critically analysing) our documentation (our creative and personal reactions) of the document (the collection object). Is the attention to the layering of our stages and nuances of response in research the key to more authentic and diversified histories; particularly when it is inspired by the connection between the collector and the researcher in the act or performance of historical archival study? Hodgdon, referencing Benjamin, successfully locates the subject of the creator of historical narratives as part of the "theatre of memory" in archival research, documenting and collecting processes and in her own writing for her book: "'Memory,' writes Walter Benjamin, 'is not an instrument for exploring the past but its theatre.' Read phenomenologically, what are the effects and affects of […] compositions, of […] framing and re-framing, of […] artistic manipulations?"[24] Perhaps positing that there is something distinctive about the theatre historian in an archive that can offer an overtly creative outlook to archival research in general?

In this respect, to comprehend history through archive collection objects it is useful to imaginatively conceptualise that the historian is not alone, they are joined by the spirit of the collector. Who they are, what they did, why they collected and when are all a fundamental part of the resource object's material make-up. There are tensions in approaching historical research like this since, as a defining source of evidence, it is a metaphysical gesture, one of the imagination and not necessarily consisting of supported

[23] Ibid
[24] Hodgdon, Barbara (2016) p.63

evidence of the profession. This makes it important to state that it is one method of approach to collections among many that could strengthen it, yet it is a broadly informative place to start. Vince proposes that history is written from both "evidence and the historian" in equal balance in his essay "Theatre History as an Academic Discipline"[25]. Here, Vince aligns the collector, the researcher, the historian and the artist in equal significance to history writing as separate from the material "evidence": history being the performative interaction between subject and object.

This performative nature can be seen in the way both researchers and collectors form narratives through the selection and display of items, the reveal of a new approach to a subject, the vocalisation of the disenfranchised or dispossessed in history, the theatricalisation of stories in exhibition, the dissemination of ideas to an audience or readership and recreating/representing the ephemeral. Helen Freshwater reminds us that that relationship is just one layer of how history is made and one part of the "allure of the archive": "This need not lead towards fatalistic conception that there are no facts, only interpretations. Derrida notes that the contemporary awareness of historical indeterminacy is at the heart of our desire to return to the archive as a source of knowledge: 'We are *en mal d'archive*: in need of archives.'"[26]

The performativity in this process is much akin to "re-enactment"[27] where practical methodologies are employed in archival research, encouraging artistic narratives through the handling and sensorial comprehension of objects as they are interpreted, utilised and interpreted again. Objects are continuously translated and re-translated through the human choices made to generate meaning from their materiality. Being aware of these mutable stories and including them in the telling of history can invite new and diverse thinking on archival objects. What I am positing that is new to critical thinking is that in the identification of a through-line between the personal implication and application of the collector 'then' and the researcher 'now' we can encourage the recognition of the endless facets of the

[25] Vince, R. W (1989)
[26] Freshwater, Helen (2003) p.730
[27] Clarke, Paul (2013)

performativity of objects spurred by human impression on them from context to context. The outcome being that to comprehend the creative potentiality of archival research, dissemination and exchange and utilize it in order to diversify historical and cultural responses to three-dimensional and paper-based archive material breathes life into both archival practices and historical literacy and museology.

Approach to Archival Material and Beyond

This study was designed to engage me in my own object-based research methodology. I needed to employ self-reflexivity on my associated response to stimuli, awareness of the creativity and imagination of narrative output along with the scholarly rigour of secondary research with Paul Veyne's words in mind: "Rigor applies to the level of criticism"[28]. Context is only imaginable after we have chosen a subject from whom to construct an idea of possible experiences, based on their potential and likely circumstances in time and space. The result is the 'framing' of a life from one point of reference in space and time to another (to frame is to draw awareness to something within proposed perimeters of concept and idea much like the framing of a painting). For example, the parameters for the context of Marie Scharning (a subject of my case study report in chapter two) is framed as between 1895-1960, from birth date to death date, in the UK, as a theatre actress and administrator so that we do not overload ourselves with information from the outset. Once the information we are seeking is found within these parameters we can isolate that data and begin to deconstruct and analyse the choice of these parameters and what they too contribute to our creativity in historical research. Postlewait's broad definition: "Context: circuit, frame, structure, circumference or periphery of experience" [29] can be helpful as a model for the way researchers and collectors can formally construct and deconstruct a comprehension of the complexities of the past and formalise them for successful dissemination.

Once "framed", the researcher applies their knowledge and perspectives, influenced by their own experiences and associations with the world around them, just as one does when one visits a museum. The static collection item in a glass cabinet becomes the site of a wide and varied patchwork quilt of

[28] Veyne, Paul (1984) p.14
[29] Postlewait Thomas (2009) p.10

personal stories. For example, Clarke refers to material that is documentary, as in it is a narratologically produced docmument of an event, place or person (in performance, in this context) as more idea than evidence: "the documentary image functions theatrically, it does not offer direct access to the event recorded, nor is it truthful, impartial or reliable as evidence"[30] and I would apply this to any collected item used in exhibition: the style of theatrical context being presented is personal to the researcher, a "re-enactment"[31]. By re-engaging researchers with the context of the collector they will behold the collected objects for what they are in relation to a personal experience that has inspired their presence: the perceived collector's context. In the act of handling, smelling, feeling and hearing collected items the researcher enters into the process of reconnecting with the objects' human provenance as it evokes what the collector may have experienced in their encounter but simultaneously inspires memory and nostalgia based on the researchers' own circumstantial experience. In the comprehension of the layering up of emotional and physical engagement that resides within human reaction with objects we can observe it enriches our phenomenological relationship to the past through collections. The deeper and wider the access, the more likely the opportunity to seek embedded or forgotten subjects. This confidence can both help avoid this application of 'shelf-life' to objects and invite individual study to reconnect with other researchers through a discourse of broader exploration with resources.

Critical and Theoretical Approaches

This thesis seeks to offer a practical and philosophical model for a cross-disciplinary methodology in archival research. This means that I will be using and presenting a spectrum of theoretical areas, including: Material Culture, Performance Studies, Museology, Historiography, Literary Theory and Reception. This section will discuss the complexity of utilising a broad theoretical influence outlining the journey that my research has gone through and how I may go forward in relating my work to the academic and critical world from which it has synthesized arguments. In order to clarify, I have broken down the main examples of influential theory that have been referenced in this thesis and have guided

[30] Clarke, Paul (2013) in Borggreen, Gunhild and Rune Gade p.381
[31] Ibid

my research into areas covering: Empiricism and Object Based Learning, Narrative, Historiography, Encounter, Collecting, Material Culture, Queer time, history and reception, Performativity and Exhibition and Museology. Key works that are most useful in the shaping and informing of particular chapters are interrogated in further depth and analysed for the contribution that they make to this study as the thesis unfolds.

Empiricism and Object Based Learning

My methodology for this thesis is grounded in part in the ideas of acquiring knowledge empirically; through hands on experience with materials. The concept is that anyone, whether they have an academic interest or otherwise should in theory be able to behold collection objects and build their own comprehension of history from a mere encounter. This thesis recognizes parts of positivist pragmatism of Empiricism of the turn of the 19th century which made claims that through experience and application of logical reasoning they could source truth and authenticity since. As William James stated in his 1909 book, *The Meaning of Truth,* "Truth happens to an idea. It becomes true, is made true by events. Its verity is in fact an event, a process, the process namely of its verifying itself, its verification. Its validity is the process of its validation"[32]. As influential as empiricism has been to debates on historicism, this thesis only takes the theory that a use of corporeal and personal experience with objects can generate an overarching ingress to further human interaction with archival resources. Yet, "validation" and "verification" is, of course, at the heart of this thesis equally. My proposal from this is that a broader historical 'return' or 'product' is possible in the act of including all individual responses as valid for historical study. This led me to the suggestion that an awareness of our inextricably linked physical and intellectual presence with objects can help us to locate the specificity of our subjective associations and cultural semiotic readings of collections. The histories that would be subsequently deduced from this process of object based research would offer a more particularly 'human' context.

This deduction then led me to methodologies that have been putting this in place in research institutions,

[32] James, William (1909) p.1

particularly Object-Based Learning for historical study. This is the pedagogical focus on using objects to stimulate ideas and impart knowledge in archives, museums and classrooms, involving visual imagery as well as touch, where appropriate, with three-dimensional materials based on the experiential knowledge acquisition theory of empiricism. Margaret Hedstrom and John Leslie King, for example, cite original Empiricist philosophers, René Descartes and Francis Bacon, in their own theories and reports on OBL (Object Based Learning):

> An essential contribution of both Descartes and Bacon was the recognition that knowledge could only be achieved by the application of method, a systematic protocol abstracted from the effort to understand any given thing, but applicable to the effort to understand many things. The methods of reason and empiricism are complementary and are often used iteratively on the path to knowledge. The quest for ultimate knowledge is the establishment of concrete, global understanding from the evidence of the particular.[33]

A method to understand any given thing that is applicable to many things seems to be what object-based learning (or object-based research, in the case of this thesis) appeals to. Although Descartes and Bacon's Empiricism originally had rather grandiose claims to standing for "ultimate knowledge" and "global understanding", the organicism of our general cognitive response to objects in the attempt to make sense of the world around us is a way of comprehending wider structures and patterns from the "evidence of the particular", that is, what is particular to us, what we find interesting and what we take it to mean, for our own contextual reasons. Helen Freshwater for example, battles with these notions: "the latter half of the twentieth century has seen a sustained theoretical offensive against the empiricist approaches that have upheld the archive's symbolic status. In response to this development, some historians have settled for acknowledgment of the force of these critiques, whilst maintaining their commitment to archival research as a method of investigation. Nonetheless, it is still possible to find historians who reject what they perceive as the misleading distortions of 'theory' in favour of the recalcitrant, but dependable, 'thing': archival evidence."[34]

The following works that employ Hedstrom and King's ideals have been of paramount value to this research: Joseph Bromfield and Jennifer Jones Cavanagh's article "A Historiography of Informed

[33] Hedstrom, Margaret and John Leslie King (2004) p.4.
[34] Freshwater, Helen (2003) p.6

Imagination"[35], Rosalind Duhs' "Learning from University Museums and Collections in Higher Education: University College London"[36], Francesca Marini's "Performing Arts Archives: Dynamic Entities Complementing and Supporting Scholarship and Creativity"[37] Devorah Romaneck and B. Lynch's article "Touch and the value of object handling: Final conclusions for a new sensory museology"[38] and Helen Chatterjee's "Object-based Learning in Higher Education: The Pedagogical Power of Museums"[39]. Together they cover the phenomenology of connection through time via touch and experiment with objects, the value of learning through doing, the value of sensory learning for museology, critical exploration through discovery and enjoyment and the potential to enliven the use of archive materials through use.

By way of an introduction to her edited book, Lorraine Daston says: "We are interested in how talkativeness and thingness hang together" and goes on to reference Descartes' *Discours de la Methode* (1637) and Francis Bacon's logical fallacy saying "the very word "idol" became a metaphor for epistemological error, as in Francis Bacon's idols of the cave, tribe, marketplace, and theatre. An odor of fraud and folly hangs about this sort of talking thing."[40] Therefore, this thesis must be aware of the metaphysical nature of conceptualizing that objects can communicate with humans through interaction.

Narrative

This thesis makes a progression from conceiving of individual "interest"[41] (Veyne proposes that this is not only the starting point but the entire point of historical research) in OBL (object-based learning) towards nurturing the individual in historiography to consider a collection as if it were a text to be read and interpreted. This particularly invokes the imaginative "vision"[42] that Glynne Wickham attributes to the Bristol Theatre Collection, a place with the 'spirit' of creativity at its heart. Within the archive,

[35] Bromfield, Joseph and Jennifer Jones Cavanagh (2009)
[36] Duh, Rosalind (2010)
[37] Marini, Francesca (2008)
[38] Romaneck, Devorah and B. Lynch (2008)
[39] Chatterjee, Helen (2010)
[40] Daston, Lorraine (2004) p.11-12
[41] Veyne, Paul (1984) p.14
[42] Wickham, Glynne (1954) p.109

object-based research allows us to tap into our discursive instincts, inciting all of the potential "danger"[43] (lacking scholarly rigour) storytelling tropes like anecdote, bias, fantasy, aesthetic and emotion in historical study and writing can pose. Hayden White most concisely justifies this through his transferable term "Emplotment" which he suggests is a primary concern for impactful and informed history writing:

> I would argue histories gain part of their explanatory effect by their success in making stories out of mere chronicles; and stories in turn are made out of chronicles by an operation which I have [in the opening chapter, 'The Burden of History'] called 'emplotment' I mean simply the encodation of the facts contained in the chronicle as components of specific kinds of plot structures.[44]

This 'emplotment', the plot, character, event construction of interpretations of history is useful for understanding how collectors write historical narratives through their choices with objects. Recognising the singular subject within one's own interpretation reminds us of the particulars of the individual response which can then be deconstructed and analysed. White speaks of such a justification for the theatricalisation of our perceived histories: "One of the marks of a good professional historian is the consistency with which he reminds his readers of the purely provisional nature of his characterisations of events, agents and agencies found in the always incomplete historical record."[45]. Classical chronicling historians have condemned this for lacking a framework that reins in these ideas, much like Northrop Frye who in *On Culture and Literature* in 1978, mentioned that literature is mythology but history cannot be literary: "In a sense the historical is the opposite of the mythical, and to tell the historian that what gives shape to his book is a myth would sound to him vaguely insulting"[46]. As White suggests, the only remarkable prerequisite for being a good historian is the understanding that all renditions will use subjectively inductive reasoning, "purely provisional" where the conclusion is accepted as being probabilistic, "always incomplete historical record"[47] even if it's premises are considered true. This thesis takes from these arguments that there are no absolutes in the forming of any narrative and to go forward with this in mind is likely to be more fruitful an endeavour for new readings

[43] Shanks, Michael (2001) p.14
[44] White, Hayden (1978) p.83.
[45] White, Hayden (1974) p.82
[46] Frye, Northrop (1978) p.23.
[47] White, Hayden (1974) p.82

in theatre and performance history through archives and museums.

The idea behind the exploration of narrative theory in relation to performative practices in historiographical dissemination is that to contextualize more is to narrate better hopefully serving to make historical comprehension richer and broader and more diverse. Particularly when relating to the narrative practices of collectors and researchers across time. The reciprocal trajectory here reminded me of the reader - author relationship in literary criticism prompting the reference to the semiotic writings throughout this thesis of Mieke Bal, particularly her article "Telling Objects: A Narrative Perspective on Collecting"[48] in which she proposes that it is not a question as to whether narratives are fiction but that their fictionality can be measured by degrees and Jean Baudrillard's "The System of Collecting" in which he suggest collecting is a narrative pursuit aligned with how we conceive of the world around us: "it is invariably *oneself* that one collects" [49]. So through these different narrative practices of comprehending the archive and collecting one can reflect on the concept of subjectivity itself by contextualizing oneself within the contexts of others in time and space. As Judith Halberstam states: "My archive is not labour history or subaltern movements. Instead I want to look for low theory and counter knowledge in the realm of popular culture and in relation to queer lives, gender, and sexuality."[50] There is the potentiality in these statements that the only reason one shares subjectively in historical narratives is because it is relevant to the contexualisation of ideas and thus the ontology of narrative as a process. In Halberstam's argument, it is only the choice to pursue one's own narrative groove that matters.

Historiography

The thesis refers to a performative historiography as it offers a pertinent humanist approach to history writing, one where the individual and collective experiences of the body in the world is alluded to as part of an informative and important historical narrative. Halbertsam, Mieke Bal, Hayden White and

[48] Bal, Mieke (1994) in Elsner, John and Roger Cardinal
[49] Jean Baudrillard (1994) in Elsner and Cardinal p.12.
[50] Halberstam, Judith (2011) p.19

Susan Pearce consider individual trajectories and the validity of the myth in historical narrative which back up the influential ideas of Veyne and Vince [51] in the exploration of my methodology. Veyne states that any human is a historian as historiography is born of different methods of encounter and comprehension:

> It is but the light emanating from a sufficiently documented account; it offers itself to the historian in the narrative and is not an operation separate from the latter, any more than it is for a novelist. All that is related is comprehensible, since it can be related. Thus, we can conveniently reserve for the world of the true-to-life, of causes and ends, the word 'comprehension' [...] which we use as soon as we open our eyes on the world and on our fellow men. To put it into practice and to be a true historian, or nearly so, it is enough to be a man- that is to let oneself go.[52]

To "let oneself go" and "open our eyes on the world" as a means of disseminating new and diverse stories from primary resources is a fitting framework for the methodology discussed in this thesis as it encourages experimentation outside of the myopic structures of proposed scholarly rigour. Perhaps these could broadly be considered the bureaucracy and disciplinary boundaries of academic languages that affect availability of fees and funding opportunities for playful, low culture and experimental subject matter based on individual perspective and experience. Veyne's ideas offer a permission to freedom to validate the autobiographical inevitability in historiographical study of archival materials that can potentially be used to remind researchers that they are active figures in their own performance with archive collections and subsequent dissemination of ideas. A subjective approach to theatre histories engages the ego, appeals to the self (an inclusive gesture by nature) and prompts general self-reflexivity in the act of looking at and perceiving objects. "History is made of the same substance as the lives of each of us" [53].

Our behaviour in the everyday as human subjects is to conceive of our environment in relation to self-identity with things, this is what makes us social. An awareness of one's own difference helps us to contemplate and include the difference of others in their response to things in the world. These

[51] Vince, R. W. (1989) and Paul Vince (1984)
[52] Veyne, Paul (1984) p.90.
[53] Ibid. p.31.

historiographers have prompted me to believe that this is transferable to archival study for history. Both Vince and Veyne are interested in how history can allow us to 'comprehend' the methods by which we are in communication with the ongoing cultural context of our experiences of time. A self-awareness of our own story within and outside stories of the past in historiography introducing the idea of history as meta-narrative by definition. "The key word is 'interesting'; to speak of historical importance would be too serious"[54] Other such influences have been Jacky Bratton and her exploration of how theatre history has been approached over the centuries in *New Readings in theatre History*[55]. Kate Dorney as she reminds us of the work that happens in the archive curatorially and how this is used or not in the further historical research in her articles "Excavating Enthoven" and "The Ordering of Things"[56]. Tracy C. Davis and her introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to Performance Studies* in which she suggests the "turn"[57] in historiography to contemplate new readings.

I was particularly interested in how through feminist theories of history scholars like Elin Diamond, Jacky Bratton and Tracy C. Davis discuss the necessity for women scholars to go further away from male-dominated power structures by cutting a deep ideologically feminist groove to make an impact when writing new histories: a proposal to rupture and de-stabilise patriarchal time and narrative. Offering news ways of studying the individual encounters between subject and object with reference to personal difference be it feminist, queer, black writings on encounter in the world. This also led to ideas from queer historiography shared in the work of Judith Halberstam[58], Elizabeth Freeman[59], E.L McCallum and Mikko Tuhkanen[60] and Sara Ahmed[61] being referred to regularly throughout the thesis as they look at using and carving personal difference into our historiographical considerations for unique perspectives. Ideas that what denotes queer and radical history is the acceptance of failure in everyday life, that incites new voices and previously silenced voices to be heard has been useful. Since

[54] Ibid. p.17.
[55] Bratton, Jacky (2003)
[56] Dorney, Kate (2014) and (2010)
[57] Davis, Tracy C. (2008) p.5
[58] Halberstam, Judith (2011)
[59] Freeman, Elizabeth (2011)
[60] McCallum, E.L. (2011)
[61] Ahmed, Sara (2006)

"failure" defines what is not successful as defined by the hetero-normative, patriarchal, conservative tradition that has prevailed in the academy right up to the present it comes to represent what has not survived or has been sidelined by historical archival studies. I felt that these theoretical discussions take the post-structural discourses on necessary change to a positive level to inspire new thinking on our approach and relation to objects. Feminist theory of Julia Kristeva[62], Mieke Bal[63], Judith Butler[64], Dee Heddon[65] and Carolyn Steedman[66] have been helpful tools in reconsidering perspective in considering our relation to material and culture. The richness of all of these varied perspectives strengthens my own idea that archival research can and should be self-reflexive and in particular, if one has something unusual, new, illuminating or marginal from which to draw the contexualisation for their perceptions, one should identify it and hold it up to scrutiny as part of the performative historiographical process.

Encounter

My interest in the politics of play in the human experimentation with objects in collections is explored by stage actor, director and educator, Lou Bellamy, in his keynote speech from the 'Twenty-Eighth Mid-America Theatre Conference, Changing Theatrical Landscapes: Mapping New Directions in History, Pedagogy, and Practice in the Twenty-first Century' (2008), in praise of object based learning for future expansion of use for archives:

> As educators and as artists, our responsibility is not to just engender new ways of thinking but to be constantly critical of ourselves, vigilant in our implementation of the systems and the tools we use to pin down moving cultural life. To stage it, to page it, requires that we know it. But we must know it without endeavouring to change it. Rather, let it change us, the seekers. We seek to make room, to engage dialogue, not to speak for, to name, or to reinvent systems that are already viable, vital, and thriving without us. We go to them because they are rich, because we are seeking something to add to our lives. Let us not dishonor the worth of what already exists by colonizing it with applications of our own theory, experience, or knowledge as precedent, normal, or "right." We must get away from notions of "discovery" and strive instead to create space for "moments of encounter." We come with respect, with awe, with curiosity, with need. We come with our own baggage, strengths, desires, and opinions. The idea of the frontier is one of encounter.[67]

[62] Kristeva, Julia (1989)
[63] Bal, Mieke (2009) and (2001)
[64] Butler, Judith (1993)
[65] Heddon, Dee (2002)
[66] Steedman Carolyn (2001)
[67] Bellamy, Lou (2008) p. 2.

Bellamy's keynote speech draws directly on the relationship between researchers and institutional resources and the literary/artistic processes that we engender when making new creations from practical experience. As a practitioner who works particularly on broadening ideas of the African American experience and history through performance, Bellamy offers a particularly pertinent reminder to sustain the post structural emphasis on 'encounter' rather than 'discovery'. Encounter is implemented in this thesis as a way of exercising the *moments* of experience and capturing ephemerality in history writing; much as collections are designed to document performance past. Bellamy reminds us that we must historicise without "endeavouring to change it. Rather, let it change us, the seekers": the subjective, object-based responses to history are nothing without the chronicling tradition and despite its prescriptive agenda this element of rigour must be respected for its unique approach too. I talk of encounter of collector with objects, encounter of researchers with these objects and the encounters of museum visitors with objects in exhibition. Historical research must, either way, be seen to be productive, accurate, appealing, accessible, original and inclusive at once. This has fueled my focus on the engagement of the body in communication with objects, how are our emotional "baggage, strengths, desires and opinions" felt in the sensorial reading of objects? How the senses evoke memory which leads to personal association and through one's self-reflexion how one's conviction to ideology via experience effects theoretical readings of objects and images. Mathias Danbolt[68], in relation to queer activism, Paul Clarke[69] in relation to re-enactment, and Heike Roms[70] with reference to community histories consider the interest in audience memory as documentation in itself as part of the archive of performance history. This thesis takes influence from these perspectives as to the value of the post-colonial break down of narrative, historiographical, archival and museological institutions where one must consider 'encounter' foremost as the reflexion upon the humble individual experience as not knowing but conceiving of something contexualised by ones immediate material and cultural circumstances, in other words, not knowing but mirroring.

[68] Danbolt, Mathias (2010) and (2013)
[69] Clarke, Paul (2013)
[70] Roms, Heike (2013), (2016) and (2017)

Collecting

This thesis owes much to the use of Susan Pearce's analyses of the act of collecting, including her texts: *Experiencing Material Culture in the Western World*[71], *Interpreting Objects and Collections* and *Museums, Objects and Collections*[72] which helped to consolidate ideas about how the human subject is predisposed to seek knowledge through experiment or play with objects. She suggests that we engage in this act of play in collecting and I would argue that the same goes for the act of researching in our deciphering of objects for historical narrative in our encounter and relation to them. She says: "Collecting seems to operate in that obscure zone between cultural ideas of value and the deepest levels of individual personality"[73]. This inspired my focus on the 'performativity' of narrative ritual and the unconscious, everyday cognitive response to things in the world, our creative narrative responses to them and our gleaned philosophies of knowledge. Bringing together my theory that the collector, researcher and object share performative acts of ritualisation in the writing of history through archives. Pearce's key ideas seem to be based on psychoanalytical references to how we grow and develop in the world in relation to materials and how this informs collecting practices and social implications for this later in life. "In practice the actual objects and the cognitive process which makes sense of them are never separated in our minds. This is because we are dealing with the material world in which […] objects are always both 'really' or metonymically within their own world and the subjects of our metaphorical image-making."[74] Similarly to Baudrillard who discusses how we utilize objects as part of our ebb and flow through life, Pearce says that we have an inseparable "emotional relationship of projection and internalisation which we have with objects"[75]

In relation to the phenomenological, psychology of collecting being a symptom of human interaction in the world, Ahmed has also been useful[76]. In relation to material culture of collecting, Maurice Rheims

[71] Pearce, Susan (1997)
[72] Pearce, Susan (1994)
[73] Pearce (1994) p.35.
[74] Pearce (1993) p.41.
[75] Ibid. p.43.
[76] Ahmed, Sara (2006)

talks of the "transient, durable, rubbish"[77] spectrum of our interest in objects that dictate our use and thus political relationship to things in the world. There is the message that collections have their foundation in a creativity that sorts the narrative strand of interest from mass production. Pearce discusses the potential goals of collectors as striving for completion, closure or perfection which may dictate the length, breadth and depth of the collection and an idea that has been influential to my methodological approach particularly when taking the entire collection as an object of historical communication in isolation. Collections are extensions of the self to Pearce. "Collections are the artistic creation of self out of self, part of the connection of past and present and the hope of a future. Collectors who seek out what they love are involved in an effort of self-discovery and self-affirmation which is characteristically human and so, no matter how trivial others may perceive the material to be, is itself never trivial."[78] Lorraine Daston[79], in *Things That Talk,* Elsner and Cardinal[80] and Walter Benjamin[81] on collecting practices, Jacques Derrida[82] on archives, Barbara Hodgdon[83] on collection histories and Michel Foucault and the deviation of approach in a colonial Western culture, all discuss the archeology of our interaction with collected items which informs my interest in subjectivity, autobiography and selfhood in this thesis.

Material Culture

Material Culture is useful for conceptualizing collecting as a metaphor for many social and developmental behaviours and practices. Matter can be read backwards in time/use for the motivation of its production and thus possible meanings of the objects when isolated as collected items. This helped me to comprehend how history is written from the specificity of the politics and economies of semiotics and meaning-making from broader cultural experiences with objects. In particular the use of Michel

[77] Rheims, Maurice (1961) p.41.
[78] Pearce (1993) p.66.
[79] Daston, Lorraine (2004)
[80] Elsner, John and Roger Cardinal (1994)
[81] Benjamin, Walter (1992) and (1936)
[82] Derrida, Jacques (1995)
[83] Hodgdon, Barbara (2016)

Foucault's *The Archaeology of Knowledge*[84], Slavoj Zizek's *The Parallax View*[85], Lorraine Daston's edited essays in *Things That Talk*[86] and Bill Brown's "Thing Theory" were useful in grounding the complexities of a more sociological human relation to stuff in space and time. This brought in the concepts of Marxism and "commodity fetishism"[87] as the precursor to the danger of use of objects in politics of power and class identity and the affect of 'forgetting' on the life-cycle of objects[88] and their mutable meanings over time. The focus on performativity of objects from ideology on the social and individual relations in the world was considerably influenced by writings on 'things' and 'objects' since this was to be one third of my triangulation model for deciphering the personal meaning making employed in archive collections. Fiona Candlin and Raiford Guins' book *The Object Reader*[89] has therefore been invaluable as an introduction to current thinking on the connection between these things. The life cycle of things brought under investigation from a mutably social perspective of Koptyoff in "The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process"[90] and Prown in "Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method"[91] have been highly influential for their discussions of the mutable value and significance of things due to nuances in human use and approach.

Performativity

In order to comprehend the complexity of layers of meaning in objects for histories and understand our own conscious and unconscious application of ideas to the performance of people and things in archives, I contemplated performativity to act as an overarching theory. This helps to conceive of how we behave and cognitively comprehend things, narrate experiences and apply identity to our endeavours, in the act of collecting and history writing. Clearly as the original coiner of the phrase, Judith Butler[92] must be

[84] Foucault, Michel (2002)
[85] Brown, Bill (2001)
[86] Daston, Lorraine (2004)
[87] Marx, Karl (1970)
[88] Arjun, Appadurai (1988)
[89] Candlin, Fiona and Raiford Guin (2009)
[90] Koptyoff, Igor (1986)
[91] Prown, Jules David (1982)
[92] Butler, Judith (1993)

considered but it is Rebecca Schneider's[93] clarification of how the term performative has been transposed into more general use not just about gender that has been most inspirational and locates my thesis appropriately back within the University of Bristol Theatre Collection with theatre and performance collections and using theatre and performance studies. Schnieder suggests "performatives are discursive", "in excess of any fully conscious manipulation" and "the great stream of repetition by which any word is both ghosted by a historicity not completely accessible to it and is uncertain of its future". This gives performativity a timeless feel, not easily defined but also routed simultaneously in the past, present and future by experience and encounter. Let us not forget Peggy Phelan's *Unmarked*[94], Donatella Barbieri's *Costume in Performance: Materiality and Culture and the Body*[95], Paul Clarke's "Performing the Archive: The Future of the Past"[96], Dee Heddon's "Performing the archive: following in the footsteps"[97], Mathias Danbolt "The Trouble With Straight Time"[98], Heike Roms' "Mind the Gaps: Evidencing Performance and Performing Evidence in Performance Art History"[99], Rebecca Schneider's "Archives Performance Remains"[100], Tracy C. Davis[101] and Barbara Hodgdon[102] also bring the performativity of historiography to trial in their works and are cornerstones of contemporary ideas on the subject.

Exhibition and Museology

Finally, my ideas have drawn me to explore Museology as a way of theoretically interrogating the medium of exhibition which features prominently as an ideal mode of dissemination of ideas in this

[93] Schneider, Rebecca (2001) p.29 "Conscious performance and ritual acts veil or blind, 'conceal' their dependence on the profound conventionality of discursive performance, ritual and theatricality is consciously embodied, performatives are discursive and somehow unconscious. They are not willed, but blindly participate in that great stream of repetition by which any word is both ghosted by a historicity not completely accessible to it and is uncertain of its future to a degree that is always in excess of any fully conscious manipulation."
[94] Phelan, Peggy (1993)
[95] Barbieri, Donatella (2017)
[96] Clarke, Paul (2013)
[97] Heddon, Dee (2013)
[98] Danbolt, Mathias (2013)
[99] Roms, Heike (2016)
[100] Schneider, Rebecca (2001)
[101] Davis, Tracy C. (2013)
[102] Hodgdon, Barbara (2016)

thesis and I have examined a number of practical examples of what is being and can be done in the art of curation. I reference the book that was published alongside Grayson Perry's British Museum exhibition, *Tomb of the Unknown Craftsman*[103], as a subjective example of how one may successfully engage with collections in a creatively performative and personal way. The scholarly readings that I sourced are most prominently from the The University Museums and Collections Journal[104] and I have focused on how researchers have been creatively applying historical ideas within the institutions and organisations available to us to induce access through sharing and education. In my thesis, exhibitions offer a performative narrative through creative readings which are applied to outward treatment of objects for history: the public side of the archive collection. Along with the scholarly writings on OBL, already mentioned under empiricism, that take particular interest in the pedagogical use of objects in museology, I have looked at publications including Nick Merriman's book, *Making Early Histories in Museums*[105], which discusses the individual's experience of the museum exhibition as a visitor seeking a narrative impression of history through the display of objects. The subject of Museology and exhibition brings all of these theoretical findings on archival study together into examples of practical methodology from which we can read theatre, performance, literature, philosophy, history, reception, archaeology and visual culture. The archeology of things, commodities, objects, material and items in performative historiography are discussed by Kate Dorney[106], Michael Shanks[107], Anothony Jackson[108], Andre Lepecki[109] and Susan Bennett[110]. These theoretical works reflect passionate and scholarly critical reviews of theatre and museums that inspired my interest in performance and museology as interchangeable in many of their practices.

The Chapters

The following chapter is called Haptic Historiography: Engaging Materially with the Archive

[103] Perry, Grayson (2012)
[104] UMACJ
[105] Merriman, Nick (1999)
[106] Dorney, Kate (2010), (2013) and (2014)
[107] Shanks, Michael (2001)
[108] Jackson, Anthony (2005)
[109] Lepecki, Andre (2010)
[110] Bennett, Susan (2012)

Collections. It begins by looking at encounter and being with objects: how as collected items we may read objects based on a reflection on different kinds of collecting and relations to material and history we may have. Autobiography and the self in collecting, leisure, play and consumption looking at the drives, motive and styles of collecting and the performative ways the collector behaves with objects within certain cultural impetuses. Then, how these relationships affects the life-cycle of objects: how we manipulate the meaning of objects, the material world and thus archival items and why. How the human and the material they produce perform together for time.

The chapter then focusses down upon how the phenomenon of encounter defines the performativity of archival research. How layers and levels of performativity exist within collections and their use. How performance studies and theatricality inform broadening ways of exploring archives for historical research. Evidence and anecdote, the storytelling, creative narrative and imaginative vision and embodying memory in performance documentation and finally the body itself in engagement with material. How we choose, position and read archival materials as a matter of everyday interaction and how this model can be reflected upon to understand the deeper sources of information that can be tapped and validated for archival research.

Chapter Three will give close demonstration of how we might reflect upon our encounter with collected items as a way of disseminating historical interpretations by looking with particularly focused detail at my research in the University of Bristol Theatre Collection. Named Curatorial Thinking; from each separate case study that I have enlisted to represent certain styles of collecting, I have selected four-five items as "things that talk"[111] to discuss what we may behold from collections if we concentrate on the collector and their style of collecting. Applying to the case studies the theories and ideas around potential motives for and impacts of collecting discussed in chapter two such as consumerism, belonging, play, privilege and fetishisation: this is with a move towards a sort of exhibit of what this can do, what three dimensional items may impart to those who encounter them in the archive and out.

[111] Daston, Lorraine (2013)

The final chapter, Creative Dissemination of Ideas, will take this approach into consideration and question how it would fair in the world of exhibition, museology, object based learning and performance. The first section draws on the implication of a practical application of these things for learning and experience, looking at vitality and life in paper-based archives, movement and touch of collected items, conservation and quality of access, information literacy, the corporeal and the ghostly and audience as archive.

The second section will discuss queer theory in relation to new and different ways of encountering and interpreting time, history, reception and the archive as forces to be reckoned with in today's material world. It will also cover the phenomenology of reception, museum and exhibition settings, becoming, time, memory, failure and deviation for a new mode of archival research. In conclusion, the thesis will pull together all of these concepts for a performative historiography and reflect upon what is new here and what it can do for us in our future with archive collections.

A First Conclusion and Moving Forward

Encouraged by the opening quote by Vince and his work on a theatre historiography I have deduced for the following thesis that the collection as evidence is fundamental to the historian's informed writing of history. That accuracy is subjective in the presentation of data for historical storytelling. That evidence is not complete, it is fragmentary, there are gaps that may be filled in endless ways. Therefore, historians cannot deny their inevitable subjectivity in their search for objectivity and scrutiny of archival materials and so logical reasoning is narrow as the sole means of interpreting the past.[112] Vince's opportune reference to Glynne Wickham as founder of the University of Bristol Theatre Collection has spurred thought on the more phenomenological concerns in the forming of histories through work in the archive with collectors and their collections and Wickham's interest in spirit. With these premises in mind the thesis will go on to deliberate: How can we use performance studies as inspiration for the use of archive

[112] Vince, R. W. (1989)

collections to our greatest advantage in the writing of history? How can historical research and the archive and museum benefit from a richer, broader, more humanist perspective, in this case, looking at the personal context of the collector and the researcher in different kinds of history writing? How can research survive and thrive with the lack of absolutes and the unquantifiable elements of history writing from the archive collections by questioning ideals and interrogating traditions of evidence? What can embracing subjectivity, autobiography and general experiential responses to collections in the research stages as well as in the writing stages offer in the way of diverse and challenging histories and thus, how can research use its empirical methods of the past to stretch our imaginative vision to combine with these performative approaches to achieve scholarly historical narratives?

The University of Bristol Theatre Collection

> The Theatre Collection is open to all genuine researchers, whether academics, theatre practitioners or those with a personal interest in drama and theatre history. We encourage visitors to use our study facilities and undertake your own research.[113]

This thesis has utilized the UoBTC as a place from which to consider how generating models for access, inclusivity and freedom and breadth of encounter as diversifying resources for future histories could lend itself to alleviating some of the exclusivity that anchors the archive as a private space. The University of Bristol Theatre Collection is used by Staff, Undergraduate and Postgraduate researchers as well as outside visitors for a number of projects. Pedagogically, there has been the recent introduction of assessed research projects based in the UoBTC into Single Honours BA Theatre and Performance modules, namely: 'Performance Contexts', 'Performing the Archive' and 'Performance Histories' that have encouraged object based learning among undergraduate students. There has also been a module introduced across departments in the MA Art History where the UoBTC has been used for creating an exhibition in 'Curating the Theatre Collection'. In this thesis, I will be putting forward an argument that by being aware of the performative nature of collecting and research: harnessing subjectivity, recapitulating corporeal awareness in the reception of objects, encouraging anecdote and play with objects by focusing on the collector and one's relationship with them in time and space as a researcher

[113] http://www.bristol.ac.uk/theatre-collection/services/enquiries-and-research

can offer an appealing methodology for cross disciplinary use and early researchers.

To address how one encounters objects, how it makes one feel personally in relation to political and cultural thinking is itself radical. As it is to endeavour to say anything new and so may encourage the re-vitalisation of archival collections and re-stimulate archival practices (performances with things). If ideas seem radical, contentious or daring, particularly with reference to autobiographical and emotionally imbued narratives, they could soon become attractive simply for their difference. It is important to make the practices relevant to the vitality of theatre and performance, if the use of and reflection on archive collections is dynamic enough, nuanced and mutable historical narratives will be produced demonstrating a creative movement that is afforded by a conscientious awareness of the performativity of ones actions as a researcher. The objective of most forward thinking institutions is not only to inspire new histories but to move away from the production of forgotten histories (the formulation of which can have far reaching and disturbing cultural consequences).

Helen Chatterjee introduces the value of object based learning in her 2010 series of papers from UCL beginning with "Object-based Learning in Higher Education: The Pedagogical Power of Museums":

> Objects can be employed in a variety of ways to enhance and disseminate subject specific knowledge, to facilitate the acquisition of communication, team working, practical, observational and drawing skills, and for inspiration. Museums and the objects they house also afford a unique opportunity for cross disciplinary study with collections providing inspiration for students studying art, design, architecture, philosophy, languages, history and social sciences. The true pedagogical value of OBL is only recently being realized as museums enjoy somewhat of a renaissance in use for educational purposes. But what is the value of OBL in higher education? […] Objects have the power to inspire, inform, excite and educate; they can be used to acquire subject specific knowledge as well as more generic transferable skills such as communication and teamwork.[114]

These are all positive actions for access afforded by the principles of object based learning in research that can be utilised in all archival collections whatever their size and purpose. The UoBTC is already finding sustainable ways to do this, for example, they participate in the Bristol Doors Open Day, an

[114] Chaterjee, Helen (2010) p.108

annual event that works together with Bristol's arts and heritage organisations to allow a day's open access to private spaces and venues. This allows the public to view the current exhibition in the museum space and although the collections are still only available to view by advanced written request, at least it reminds people the resources are there. On an academic level, in 2015 the MA History of Art students curated and displayed an exhibition called "Setting Out to Shock" featuring selected examples of "radical and deliberately shocking productions from the archives"[115]. These efforts are an example of how some investigation and change can happen at the ground level of 'beholding', of the interaction between researcher, collector and object. This approach can revitalise and enliven what may once have been perceived to be a "dead issue"[116]: "Because it [an archive] has to be alive. If its existence is not known, if it does not coexist with the city, the people, the scholars ... it is a dead archive. And theatre cannot be a dead issue: on the contrary, it has to make people understand everything that is out there, convey the possibility to do and discover things."[117].

There has, at the time of writing, been no major work dedicated to the theatre and performance archive collector and different styles of collecting as performative undertakings. The triangulation model aims to make it clear about the social, cultural, political and economic relation between subject and object and the ways in which it can form identity and personal narrative through creative play. There has been writing on object theory (Zizek, Baudrillard, Koptyoff, Daston, Brown, Foucault, Freud), writing on research techniques (OBL practitioners, Clarke and Practice as Research), learning (University Museums Journal and Jackson), knowledge (Descartes, Derrida, Foucault, Bacon, Ahmed) and discourse (Roms, Kristeva, Halberstam), there has been writing on collectors (Pearce, Dorney, Benjamin, Elsner, Cardinal, Bal, Forrester) but not on the importance of the relationship between all of these elements of history production. The triangulation model posited for this thesis is a way of grounding all of these elements human experience within the fundamental methodological fleshpoint of the encounter between the collector, object and researcher.

[115] http://www.bristol.ac.uk/theatre-collection/services/enquiries-and-research/)
[116] Marini, Francesca (2008), p.27
[117] Ibid.

By way of example, I presented several conference papers at varying stages of my research degrees that addressed the inherently performative triumvirate of the relationship between the object, the collector and the researcher, all opinions that had mixed reception. At TAPRA[118] and at University of Bristol Theatre and Performance Postgraduate Symposia[119] it seemed that the practice model was conceivable in theory but to present historical account, this phenomenological understanding of ones work was not enough to produce the evidence required for a scholarly history. I was asked is mere personal encounter and the recital of experiences enough? At Performance Studies International[120], my ideas were compared to practice-as-research which was not pertinent so much as they were an investigation into the phenomenology of encounter inspired by performance practices that researchers could benefit from reflecting upon. At SIBMAS and TLA[121] the focus on sensorial encounter with archive materials as personal evidence seemed to excite those working in archive collections but the theatre historians did not understand my attention to the performativity of encounter with collections, particularly queer deviations of philsophy and phenomenology. These experiences made me wonder where such a model really had its disciplinary home and helped to shape the arguments put forward by this thesis.

Is it the case that better history is simply a more in depth look at what we are personally interested in? Veyne points out that this is not to say that we do not owe much to chroniclers and reporters of historical data but that "it is pointless to oppose a narrative history to another that aspires to be explanatory; to explain more is to narrate better, and in any case one cannot relate without explaining-the 'causes' of the fact"[122]. Without basic factual timelines and encyclopedias where would we comprehend the relational linearity of history and time? But do we need a full set of standardised references to explore history? Is our experience of time linear? Asking 'who' of the collector as we begin an exploration into personal contextual circumstances we find they are inextricably linked with wider social, political,

[118] Theatre and Performance Research Association, Royal Holloway University, 2014.
[119] An annual programme of symposia organised by the Postgraduate Researchers in the University of Bristol Theatre and Performance Department, Faculty of Arts between 2013-2015.
[120] Annual global conference of papers, performances and other presentations, discussion and panels on theatre and performance studies and research, Stanford University, 2013.
[121] Societe Internationale des Bibliothèques et des Musées des Arts du Spectacle and Theatre Library Association, New York City University, 2014.
[122] Veyne, Paul (1984) p.94

economic, artistic contexts. Concentrating on one person or one set of people as the author/s of a collection we can answer the why, when, how and where of archival objects. Investigating history is to look simultaneously at what was, what is and what may be, to isolate the past as a foreign land to be objectified is dangerous to our full understanding of social and artistic changes. Elsner and Cardinal say, "there is, so to speak, a past that is another country, but there is also a past that lies right here. If collecting is meaningful, it is because it shuns closure and the security of received evaluations and instead opens its eyes to existence – the world around us, both cultural and natural, in all its unpredictably and contingent complexity"[123]. The approach outlined in this thesis tries to close that gap by not being afraid of the subjectivity of research and collector in simultaneity in the forming of histories through encounter in the archive.

My process aims to investigate these queries by implicating myself as researcher in a curatorial exploration of the fundamentals of historiography, culture, archive and performance: private and the public, past and present, practice and theory and creativity and evidence. The methodology will demonstrate what a concentration on collectors could do for generating answers to questions on how to generate quality of access to archival materials and new thinking on their historical contexts and meanings. I chose my five collections as case studies in the University of Bristol Theater collection, with the guidance of the Archive Director, Jo Elsworth, all paper-based archives that demonstrated varying kinds of collecting process, style, agenda and content. Helen Freshwater in discussing our reliance on passports, birth certificates and driving licences to officially identify ourselves, despite otherwise being defined by and reliant on digital exchange and transfer, "the preoccupation with the original document is reflected in our day-to-day exchanges. In an age of simulacra, which is rapidly completing its transfer of the production and dissemination of information on to the computer screen, we still privilege paper document authentication."[124] The archive as space and idea will always be our link to the particulars of the unique individual.

[123] Elsner and Cardinal (1994) p.6
[124] Freshwater, Helen (2003) p.7

CHAPTER TWO:

Section One

"Haptic Historiography"[125]: Engaging Materially with the Archive

"The object is *a priori* lacking in cohesion; it is easily de-structured by thought."[126]

This chapter will explore the complex, phenomenological relationship between subject and object Baudrillard's statement that the object is a theoretically destable and mutable entity with these "things"[127] the subject must engage with the object through touch to create narrative, what Elizabeth Freeman calls "Haptic Historiography". The act of collecting is part of our everyday behavioural and discursive processes that allow us to make order of things in the world. With this in mind, we can start to see how the practices of the researcher and collector start to mirror each other in their separate but reciprocal relation to archival materials. The ways in which the collected object "lacks cohesion" and why and how it is a natural performance for us to "de-structure" material through theoretical projection on to them: "by thought". This chapter will also explore how the various critical ontologies of objects in material culture may inform our comprehension of how we approach collection items, what we are to them and what they do for us in archival research. As for collecting, as a performative process itself, this chapter will explore how collectors project onto, impress upon and leave traces of identity through their meta-narrative arrangement of chosen objects. It will look into how that reflects ideas of culture, trend, fashion, events and people as well as memories, passions, hopes, desires and in particular dreams. The collector uses their practice to project their values on to objects, they may stand in to measure time, memory, place and space within their personal contexts. The collector practices play in their leisure with materials, taking objects beyond and through different settings so that they change meaning through varying uses and locations[128]. These discussions will help us to comprehend the limits and potential of our 'connection' as researchers to those who collect and how "archival practices of care"[129] fall in to the curatorial hands of both, as authors of historical narratives. Underlining this idea of a

[125] Freeman, Elizabeth (2011) p.23
[126] Baudrillard, Jean (1994) p.22
[127] Daston, Lorraine (2004) p.9
[128] Koptyoff, Igor (1986)
[129] Roms, Heike (2013) p.38

'connect' can aid researchers in deciphering and interpreting what the chosen objects we behold in historical study can impart to us: information about the collector as an individual and their relationship to the cultural, social, political, economic and artistic circumstances that surrounded them before and during their processes, as well as, how it shapes their motives, drives and styles of collecting. Which is, in itself, a key layer of information that is rarely, if at all, used in the forming of and reflections on archival study.

This chapter will look at the idea of a "haptic historiography" as being to do with applying subjective and objective thought to objects through touch and proprioceptive encounter in order to comprehend a collection fully. Psychologically, the idea that a researcher upon their encounter with a collection can read the archival material as if it mirrors the human cognitive processes of the collectors' consciousness in structure, motivation and ontology[130] along with the theory that humans make sense of the world through semiotic linguistics[131] and then phenomenologically, that the "arrival"[132] of objects, materials, matter, the contents of a collection into our sphere of perception becomes signifier, signified and sign, based on our orientation in the world, that is to say reflects our context. Objects reflect not only personal methods of acquiring knowledge and ideologies of human encounter but they are socially implicit, imbued with cultural referents of the time they come to represent. The archive, both as a place and as an ideology, makes it possible to have physical access and behold objects' former lives. We may analyse them as what they may have been, or represented, used for or made of before they were gathered for collection, but we have a more tangible or closer idea of them as what they are before us: collected items. The researcher may then impress upon them their own interpretations of social or human significance: culture [133]. Collections are our access point to history and, as researchers, we are privileged to encounter the various facets of the object's life-cycle.

Writing on collectors in her 1992 book *Museums, Objects and Collections,* Pearce breaks down the

[130] Pearce, Susan (1997)
[131] Kristeva, Julia (1989)
[132] Ahmed, Sara (2009) p.16
[133] Prown, Jules David (1982)

process of projecting personal emotions, decorative aesthetics and nuanced practical functions onto collected objects through archival research, in the act of cross-referencing what we perceive with "a priori" knowledge:

> The collected objects are both the signifier, that is the medium that carries the message, and the signified, the message itself [...] this dual nature of the collection is at the heart of its significance. It explains why it carries the emotional resonance which comes from its 'real' relationship – the fish in the museum did once really swim off the Seychelles – and the intellectual interest which derives from its metaphorical content, which is not static but can go on carrying fresh interpretations.[134]

The duality that Pearce mentions here is key to our reading of histories through the archival collection as she suggests the signifier and the signified, emotional and intellectual, 'real' and metaphorical are merged almost indistinguishably in the being of an object collected. But also that this lends a collection object its ability to keep being reified over time.[135] Collections are the material product of choices made in light of perceived significance: what to select and what to reject for history, posterity, heritage and cultural and perceived identity. The problems arise with our objective interpretation which is in our exercise of power and control from meaning-making in the singling out, the choice of certain objects to tell a story beyond others, using the material world around us both as collectors and as researchers. In Lorraine Daston's *Things That Talk,* she refers to Roland Barthes to gesture at the seriousness of this human propensity to objectify:

> Barthe's mythic objects talk by appropriation; myths "steal" language in order to "naturalise" contentious concepts like empire. Almost any language, even the well-formed language of mathematics, can fall prey to myth; almost any object can become myth, "for the universe is infinitely suggestive." In this account, history and context, masquerading as nature and fact, can bend any and all things to ideological ends.[136]

It is our responsibility as historians to be aware of the object's ability to "become myth" not only in the potential for us to elicit our own suggestive ideologies but in that utterance behind the collector's motives, drives, processes and styles of collecting.

[134] Pearce, Susan (1993) p.39
[135] Koptyoff, Igor (1986)
[136] Daston, Lorraine (2008) p.14

The process of "reification" [137] in naming and categorisation is both subjective and objective: giving abstract ideas and concepts a level of concreteness, making objects 'live out' interpretations through our use of and proximity to them as one might use in the construction, devising or writing of a performance. We conduct complex cycles of usage and ownership with objects for our own desires, like theatrical props. As researchers it may be important to trace back these possible various meanings as collections come to represent the semiotic relationship between self and society, private and public, from which collectors come to decisions as to what is "rubbish", "transient" or "durable" [138]. To start at this foundational level of material culture, as outlined by Jules David Prown[139] in 1982, and Igor Koptyoff[140] in 1986 and others, is to ground one's investigation with the knowledge that something will not be taken at face value, which can be intellectually stunting but also to acknowledge the informative potential of the authorial intention of the collector; which after all dictates the style, motives and thus their singular narrative. From this, researchers/readers of objects, can comprehend whether the collector of these, now transposed as items, is in contestation, neutrality or participation with the cultural ideas of value and meaning that items can contextualize. It is collectors who form the initial narrative, plot, characterisation and scene of their own interpreted/felt histories, we need only ask of the individual 'author', why and how they do so, to form broader historical understanding from collections and perhaps enlighten us to forgotten histories or quieted voices. In the introduction to their book, *The Cultures of Collecting*, Elsner and Cardinal suggest that it is fear of the dirt of politics and meaning that has prescribed the forgotten and the quiet in archival histories. They posit that it is the role of the author, curator, researcher, historian or collector to make a turn-about in value judgement of archival materials and seek out the previously "unacceptable" materials: "Against the sleek amplifications engineered by scholarship and curatorial publicity that direct our admiration towards the treasure-houses and the masterpieces, we feel there is much to be learned by listening in to the quieter, subversive voices rising out of that 'unacceptable' residue lying in culture's shadow."[141]

[137] Pearce, Susan (1993) p.40
[138] Rheims, Maurice (1961) p.60
[139] Prown, Jules David (1982)
[140] Kotyoff, Igor (1986)
[141] Elsner and Cardinal (1994) p.5

Collections come to simultaneously stand for the individual who collects them, the place where they are housed and the whole world that they imagine around them in time and space; as researchers it is our purpose to investigate the relationship between these two things:

> By being chosen away and lifted out of the embedding metonymic matrix, the selected collection now bears a representative or metaphorical relationship to its whole. It becomes an image of what the whole is believed to be, and although it remains an intrinsic part of the whole, it is no longer merely a detached fragment because it has become imbued with meaning of its own.[142]

Pearce's idea of the collection being both 'metaphor' and 'metonymy' in their varying relations to the past indicate the processes of removal, distancing, use and ownership that the collector/human subject employs to relocate objects with new and different meanings. However, as Steedman reminds us, "the Archive is made from selected and consciously chosen documentation from the past and also the mad fragments that no one intended to preserve and that just ended up there"[143] so there is not always a pre-engineered structure to a collection (of which we will see more in Chapter 3). Nevertheless, the question is still how a comprehension of these choices (or lack of choices in Steedman's suggestion), upon the researcher's or visitor's encounter with the materials of the collection, can affect a reading of the collection?[144]

If the subject and the object can stand in for each other in creating historical narratives from the archive as Pearce imagines, it must be of the utmost importance that the author of these histories/researcher should also be analysed for their similar affect on meaning-making for archival research. Freshwater calls this taking responsibility for one's reinterpretation:

> As the archive cannot offer direct access to the past, any reading of its contents will necessarily be a reinterpretation. It is for this reason that the archival researcher must foreground his or her own role in the process of the production of the past; responsibility to the dead requires a recognition that the reanimation of ghostly traces-in the process of writing the history of the dead-is a potentially violent act.[145]

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[142] Pearce (1993) p.38
[143] Steedman, Carolyn (2001) p.68
[144] This will be explored in finer detail in chapter three.
[145] Freshwater, Helen (2003) p.20

It is true that a researcher should not simply disseminate their own storytelling as if it was not owned by them, it is their creative vision only. The archival researcher's experience with the materials they use must be presented as testament to the choices that they make by way of evidence.

This chapter will expand on this question looking at autobiography and the self in collections, investigating how the subjective is inevitable within the ontology of collected materials. Also, how researchers can comprehend these interpreted historical meanings more clearly and, in more depth, if they analyse their own subjective (self) within their practice with archival objects. This section questions how the collecting process can become a way of forming one's own legacy and identity after death as well as self-reflexivity whilst living, with a move towards asking how objects in isolation and in conjunction with each other in collections can come to reflect the collector's political and ideological imperatives in life through analysis of the circumstances of their choices and relation to objects.

Rosemary Matthews' biography of collector, Isabella Stewart Gardner, that I explore in more detail a little further on, calls the collection "An extension of oneself"[146] of which it can only attempt to be of course in the most contrived and theatrical of ways but Baudrillard suggest that if one tries for the collection not to be an extension of oneself, it inevitably becomes so because of this ontological blurring of subject and object in the process: "The relationship with objects has one characteristic that can never be found in the intersubjective realm: no object ever opposes the extension of the process of narcissistic projection to an unlimited number of other objects; on the contrary, the object imposes that very tendency, thereby contributing to the creation of a total environment, to that totalization of images of the self that is the basis of the miracle of collecting. For what you really collect is always yourself."[147] Baudrillard suggests that collecting, in this sense, is not social but an act of surrounding oneself with mirrored objects: material that comes to reflect the individual in isolation only, despite efforts to be intersubjective.

[146] Matthews, Rosemary (2009) p.188
[147] Baudrillard, Jean (1994) p.51

In discussion of critical theory on the intellectual and ideological as well as the physical and emotional application of identity within and through collecting practices, we start to see references to widely studied performance and theatre theory subjects like leisure, play and modes of consumption that collecting is traditionally rooted in[148]. These critical ideas will aid us in scrutinising how levels of freedom of choice are present in collecting and can affect the narrative emerging from archival materials. We will look at how collecting practices construct social relations, create and reflect awareness of material culture and economics and how this may affect what collection objects can tell us now and about the past. The chapter will lead from the politicised nature of these modes of consumption to explore Derrida's ethos that the historian and archivist, and thus, collector and researcher, in the context of this thesis, owe to their disciplines and others in terms of a "responsibility to the future"[149] The use of performance and theatre criticism can help to study the performativity of collecting and of research to remind us that they are mediums of communication that are rooted in the body and the intellect in play with materials. Finally, the section will question, if our relationships with the material world around us dictates somewhat our performance with objects in collecting and research processes, how does this then reflect back human relation to broader mythological implications of human linguistic relation to objects like emotional feelings of security, power, possession and control that Daston employs Barthes to warn us of? What bearing might this have on historical 'findings' from archival research?

Following on from this, the chapter will look at how these cognitive and practical behaviours with collections dictate and affect "the life-cycle of objects"[150]: How these preceding interactions with objects affect, manipulate and communicate what they tell us in the archive by laying out their own life-cycle or "career path"[151] Koptyoff describes this in relation to the economy of use; materials as commodities: "things may be treated as a commodity at one time or another [..] the same thing may, at the same time, be seen as a commodity by on person and as something else by another. Such shifts and

[148] Pearce (1993) p.50
[149] Derrida, Jacques (1995) p.36
[150] Benjamin, Walter (1936) p.257
[151] Koptyoff, Igor (1986) p.67

differences in whether and when a thing is a commodity reveal a moral economy that stands behind the objective economy of visible transactions."[152] These transactions are mutable over time, from one "treatment" to another. How meanings are nuanced, what objects can say, how "things talk"[153] and to who in different times and spaces can be observed by deciphering the collector's narrative style, thematic intention and cultural reflection. Combining this information with the state, condition and possible reasons for the objects 'origin' (if this is a traceable plateau in time and space), both in the world and in the collection, can allow us to contextualize what possible meanings the material may perform and to what end. And, of course, what then happens artistically and institutionally in museums and archives to impart and articulate meaning beyond manufacture, use and collection in education, in dissemination of different kinds of knowledges? This will lead to critical ideas of how the meanings of objects are formed palimpsestically in layers of applied and implied functionality[154]. The haptic is the human touch of and proprioception with materials and all of these elements: play, linguistics and material culture are what inform the communicative outcome of this physical relation, one that is at the heart of the phenomenological triangulation between collector-object and researcher.

Autobiography and Self

When embarking on archival research it is important to look to the 'self' of the collector and the 'self' of the researcher, since, as a researcher, my 'self' is inseparable from my reading of certain objects. These projections form the way I personally identify with and experience the world[155]. If being "interesting"[156] is all, in history writing, that is to say subjectively argued based on current social cultural circumstances and saying something new and different, we must at least be aware of the kinds of manipulations we are likely to make to the life-cycle of objects and the stories we may employ them to impart in the name of this interest. We must also use this level of analysis to draw a connect between 'us' as researchers

[152] Ibid, p.64
[153] Daston, Lorraine (2004) p.9
[154] Wise, M. Norton and Elaine M. Wise (2004) p.101
[155] Ahmed, Sara (2009) p.21
[156] Veyne, Paul (1984) p.17

and 'them' as collectors to deduce how their 'self' is weaved into the objects that they have chosen. Sara Ahmed calls this "queer phenomenology"[157]: philosophically contemplating how our personal conception of objects in the world is born from our "orientation", how time and space is closed down for us as historians as we focus on what is interesting to us as individuals.

Employing theories of the performance of textual narrative in relation to collecting and collections we can begin to be aware of this inter-disciplinarity intellectually. To use an apt metaphor for the overarching subject of this thesis, the encounter between a collector, researcher and archival object is much like the relationship between the performer and their stage properties: the semiotic linguistic use, function and proximity generates scenography, character and plot. Deconstructing this explicit use of dramatic stylisation and theatricality in collectors' construction of collections can provide us with the experiential context for histories, memory and cultural identity. This theatricality with materials in collecting and in archives has been mentioned by Rosemary Matthews in her 2009 article "Isabella Stewart Gardner and her Museum of Art: Collectors and Why They Collect",[158] which is a character study of the collector Isabella Stewart Gardner in relation to her art collection:

> A collector can see her collection as a way of deferring her own death, and her collected objects take on a new meaning in her mind when she realizes these objects will remain after she is dead and stand in for her continued presence. From the very beginning of Gardner's collecting years, each object in her collection was inextricably linked with her own life, a fact which resonates with a further important theoretical idea. Although a collection takes on a life of its own, it still reflects the life of its collector, to the extent that a collector often sees her collection as an extension of her own personality.[159]

This is an example of the fantasy of one's own mortality and legacy being "theatricalized" in collected materials, in the sense that it acts as synechdoche, metaphor or monument to her sensibilities, it is in itself a self-penned autobiography generating a strong sense of authorship in form, structure and narrative, building a scene within which to live and work based on personal interests and identifying one's character in the use of them. One of the case studies from the University of Bristol Theatre Collection that I explore in Chapter 3 is the Eric Jones Evans personal collection, in which, for example,

[157] Ahmed, Sara (2009) p.3
[158] Matthews, Rosemary (2009) p.186
[159] Ibid

Jones Evans mentions that he had exhibition cabinets holding his collected items that lead visitors around in a trail up the staircases of his own home. There is a photograph in the collection of Jones Evans back-dropped with these aforementioned arrangements in glass cabinets much like his own personal museum; such was his passion, motive and value that he placed on his work as well as his imaginative vision for the drama of what he did. Similarly, another collection of the UoBTC that I researched in 2010, the Berta Freistadt Collection, holds a photograph of the room in which Berta Freistadt lived and worked that encased the entire space with floor-to-ceiling book shelves holding her collection materials. Surrounding oneself with one's collection may come to be a comfort; assurance that the work, energy and passion one puts into one's pursuits and interests will not fade even if time does. John Forrester talks in his article on Sigmund Freud as a collector that the psychoanalyst felt the need to be surrounded by his collection of ancient relics wherever he went and when he moved from house to house across the world his collected objects would adorn his office and encroach upon the room at every stop: "As Freud wrote to his ex-analysand and friend Jeanne Lampl de Groot: 'All the Egyptians, Chinese and Greeks have arrived, have stood up to the journey with very little damage, and look more impressive here than in Berggasse. There is just one thing: a collection to which there are no new additions is really dead.' Freud himself died a few months later" (1938)[160] Freud seems to have 'cast' himself with his collection objects, characterising them as "the Egyptians, Chinese and Greeks", much as in some cultures a dead body might be entombed with objects reflecting personality and interest for the afterlife. The drive originally being considered religious or spiritual, to send materials, to reach someone (some entity) elsewhere, to figuratively embolden and emblazon one's identity on time with things, to fill the grave space, to make an impression, either on the Earth or spiritual realm, to form a time capsule or for protection from insidious spiritual elements.

In her article, "Shaping, collecting and displaying medicine and architecture: A comparison of the Hunterian and Soane museums", Ellen Adams writes similarly: "Teaching collections do not simply 'teach'; they teach according to a particular agenda, in a particular style, and they also indoctrinate

[160] Forrester, John (1994) p.227.

visitors about the greatness of the collector […] These men shaped their professions by collecting extensively, and then turning parts of their own homes into theatres for indoctrinating visitors into their way of thinking, and provided legacies that are still clear today"[161]. There are mixed intentions of each collector/author here; the seemingly aggressive agenda of John Soane and John Hunter (who also began exhibiting their collections in their homes) to "indoctrinate visitors about the greatness of the collector" and to promote their respective trades as working architect (Soane) and surgeon (Hunter), is noteworthy as a late 18th, early 19th century relationship to the acquisition of knowledge as possessions defining power and prowess[162]. However, all these examples have the commonality of the dual existence of collection objects standing for both metaphor and metonymy, subject and object, private and public offering that archive collections are simultaneously about the specificity of the individual and the details of the many. The autobiographical "allure"[163] of collecting to the ego worked well for Hunter and Soane and Isabella Stewart Gardner as they had scientific connections to academia and have shared their collections for further study to this day. The smaller collections must be seen to rate their "cultural relevance" just as highly so that materials can be shareable, put forward and developed as Halbertsam syas, that archive itself must stand for this vital social nature, beyond the self: "The notion of an archive has to extend beyond the image of a place to collect material or hold documents, and it has to become a floating signifier for the kind of lives implied by the proper remnants of shows, clubs, events, and meetings. The archive is not simply a repository; it is also a theory of cultural relevance, a construction of collective memory, and a complex record of queer activity."[164]

The study of collecting leads one to follow a particularly interdisciplinary path across linguistics,

[161] Adams, Ellen. (2013) p.72.
[162] Postlewait, Thomas (1989) p.3: "Systems of collecting – from cabinets of curiosities to national archives – gained momentum from the Renaissance forward as personal, then public, libraries multiplied; this impulse to gather historical data and objects is sometimes called 'antiquarianism' […] 18th/19th century German and French approach which locates historians as 'positivist', 'scientific' or 'objective' researchers and source critics. Antiquarianism developed into a professional mode of historical study. Idea that history can be dealt with systematically – 'branch of knowledge' confusion between humanities and social sciences."

[163] Freshwater, Helen (2003) p.729
[164] Halberstam, Judith (2011) p.169

literary theory, performance, history, material culture and museology as they have the shared focus of narrative storytelling through our relationship with objects. A collection in this sense may be seen as a text in and of itself, as may an object, something to be read and interpreted. As Pearce posits, "objects share with people the parallel life of the text"[165]. To begin to theoretically separate the inseparable component parts of objects and collections in order to read them affectively, fairly and with diverse thinking, it is helpful to remind ourselves of their textuality. Mieke Bal attempts to clarify this:

> Objectively, narratives exist as texts, printed and made accessible; at the same time they are subjectively produced by writer and reader. Analogously, the discursive mode of narrative feeds on this paradox. They are ostentatiously 'objective': in terms of speech-act theory, narratives are *constative* texts: like affirmative sentences, they make a statement – describing situations and events, characters and objects, places and atmospheres. Yet all narratives are not only told by a narrative agent, the narrator, who is the linguistic subject of utterance; the report given by that narrator is also, inevitably, focused by a subjective point of view, an agent of vision whose view of the events will influence our interpretations of them. [166]

The collection as a cultural medium is created by the collector as the subjective "agent of vision" and so is always "making a statement". There is self-reflection and "point of view" in collecting processes whether they are employed objectively or not, collections cannot escape the subjectivity of their narrator. For example, another case study that I refer to in chapter 3: Arnold Ridley's Collection, has the objective agenda of memorialising his work to demonstrate the inner mechanisms of working in the performing arts to academic audiences and yet is highly subjective in that the objects chosen all show him in a positive light, a stamp of his own unique significance on 20th Century British art media. Identifying these elements not only reminds us that Arnold Ridley and his son Nicholas, who helped finish the collection, wanted to impart knowledge to the academy but also that they were proud. What one beholds from this collection is imbued with humanity and emotion and can inspire us to read archival histories differently, laterally and broadly not as definitive assertions of date, place, event and person but for the experience of their potential lived use. Continuing on the point by Hayden White that all history writing is "emplottment" or myth-making by any means mentioned in Chapter One and Paul Clarke joins him in asking: "As Hayden White has asked, "How … can any past, which by definition comprises events…considered to be no longer perceivable, be represented …except in an 'imaginary'

[165] Pearce, Susan (1993) p.3
[166] Bal, Mieke (1994) p.98

way?"[167] We also cannot know for certain the affect that Ridley's wife, Althea Parker, and Nicolas Ridley had on the editing of Arnold's collection after his death therefore we cannot give all agency to his personal vision at the point of accession since he was not around to oversee it. So as with any history impressed upon a collection by a researcher it is also an objective reflection of Arnold Ridley's life and work by outside subjects that take the narrative forward.

In contrast to this, Eric Jones Evans, was involved in every aspect of his collection process from beginning to end. Every intention was self-conscious as most objects seem to say something about his passion and admiration for his subject of interest which in turn tells us about who he is. It should also not be out of place for the researcher to apply some level of self-analytical scrutiny of their own interpretations in turn. As touched upon in Chapter One, a seamless example of this is in the aforementioned work of Hodgdon in which she firmly situates herself within her own historical narrative through the careful selection of particular items from various collections: "To situate myself in this gathering of material evidence is to write a history that, as Carolyn Steedman writes, "gives a habitation and a name' to all the fragments and traces – 'all the inchoate stuff,' and especially to selected remains – that have ended up in the archive."[168] The "habitation" is within her memories and her identity or "orientation"[169] making her present within her own history of the performance.

This method of analysis is not unusual to us, more and more self-reflection and reflexivity is at the heart of the individualism of Western Capitalist culture: bettering, growing and expanding through self-interrogation we have the privilege to reconstruct our own life narratives. Materialism transposes this onto human relations with objects; building an empire of "things"[170] in order to perform identity in possession, aesthetic and creative narrative. Bal calls this "The collecting spirit"[171], an enigmatic and unquantifiable motivation essential to the definition of the pursuit of collecting that sorts those who do

[167] Clarke, Paul (2013) p.381
[168] Steedman, Carolyn (2001) p.4
[169] Ahmed, Sara (2006) p.1
[170] Daston, Lorraine (2004) p.1 says that things that speak to her are "objects of fascination, association, and endless consideration"
[171] Bal, Mieke (1994) p.100

collect divisively from those who do not. It has also been called the "allure"[172] by Helen Freshwater and the "aura"[173] by Walter Benjamin, "fever"[174] by Derrida and "fetishism"[175] by Marx, all terms that suggest one is both present and not altogether present (under a spell of sorts) in their attraction to the particular in archival study. On the one hand, collecting can be exclusive, elitist and blindly privileged (Marx, Koptyoff). Sometimes it is not merely about the quantity or quality of objects collected but the ability, agency and access to things that can constitute collecting. Having or not having the tools for contextually comprehending the collection item, moving towards ideas of knowledge and understanding are products of education and thus, more often than not, money (globally speaking). So collecting performs ideas of economy and class from a global perspective, another palimpsestic layer of meaning in the human relation to materials that we can read from them. On the other hand, it could be argued that free open access museums in the UK are changing this, particularly for the National Museums in London, as mentioned in the 2007 UK Government report that stated: "Free entry has been an amazing success, leading to an 87% increase in visits to the institutions that formerly charged for entry". But the report does go on to say: "However, the impact of free entry on other museums needs to be seen in a wider perspective. Around half of the 2500 museums in England offer free entry. The government's free entry policy saw the restoration of free admission to 10 sponsored museums, most of which are based in central London"[176]. So, as of 2007, there was still a large percentage of museums that will not have benefitted from this increased access and in fact may have suffered as a result.

Before we move on to different uses of archive collections and museums and the encouragement of broader history writings, however, we must understand the deep-rooted context from which any imperial narrowness of historical research has sprung, most notably, colonialism, slavery and the nineteenth century. The unsavory ease with which the value of an object can be transposed with the value of a human being's existence in Igor Koptyoff's anthropological essay on commodity and culture is a difficult thing to accept about the human race: "to us, a biography of a painting by Renoir that ends

[172] Freshwater, Helen (2003) p.730
[173] Benjamin, Walter (1994) p.257
[174] Derrida, Jacques (1995)
[175] Marx, Karl (1970) p.203
[176] Department for Culture, Media and Sport (2006) p. 6

up in an incinerator is as tragic, in its way, as the biography of a person who ends up murdered."[177] By way of anecdotal example, American psychologist, William James, speaks about his acquired possessions in 1890:

> A man's Self is the sum total of all that he can call his, not only his body and his psychic powers, but his clothes and his house, his wife and children, his ancestors and friends, his reputation and words, his lands and yacht and bank account. All these things give him the same emotions. If they wax and prosper, he feels triumphant; if they dwindle and die away, he feels cast down, - not necessarily in the same degree for each thing, but in much the same way for all.[178]

James seems to emotionally merge the self and the object as one, in the collection of things: a startling microcosm of a capitalist and materialist society encouraged to seek success through hard work and accumulation of politically valued things. This is a period within which Maud Beerbohm Tree and Eric Jones Evans would be likely to have taken their influences as wealthy, successful professionals and Arnold Ridley, having been born in 1896, was a child of the Fin de Siècle. It is worth questioning whether, although a clear distinction exists between them in the style and drive behind their collecting work, they too sought to surround themselves with objects as a means of reflecting self-hood and even self-worth in materials especially since the sheer quantity of items in these collections is vast and sprawling. This may help us to comprehend how far objects become the nucleus around which the collector measures time; through their experiential relation to them and what these experiences might mean historically and culturally.

Critical analysis of the philosophy of queer time is important here as it reminds us that our measure of it is personal. We should allow for new ways of carving a historical mark by comprehending other ways that people perceive time. Elizabeth Freeman equates the patriarchal, straight, materialist norm of prescribed daily perception with stasis, it is not good enough for everyone:

> Time can be money only when it is turned into space, quantity and or measure. Outside of a capitalist and heterosexist economy, though, time can be described as the potential for a domain of non-work dedicated to the production of new subject-positions and new figurations of personhood, whose "newness" is not without historical insight, though it does not follow in any precipitated way from the past.[179]

[177] Koptyoff, Igor (1986) p.67
[178] James, William (1890) p.291
[179] Freeman, Elizabeth (2009) p.54

Freeman proposes that time should not merely be measured by work and economy of use of it but by not using it bureaucratically: at ones' orientational will. McCallum and Tuhkanen back this up in *Queer Times, Queer Becomings*: "Only time allows the performative to reveal the stabilities of being as nothing but the flux of becoming."[180] In collecting and research as performative processes that generate narratives for history and thus considerers of time, there is a continuum of becoming happening, history never arrives at a definitive place, it is always changing from one becoming to another. As Paul Clarke succinctly states it is limiting if not dangerous not to behold time in this way: "Linear progress conflates the passing of time with accumulating value."[181]

Our haptic proximity to and use of objects is a way of gauging human personal relationships to the past through a linguistics with material reflecting the act of time passing and the construction of the present. This value judgement we place on our relationship with objects is psycho-socially complex and controversial in that it has to do with the history of gender and sexuality politics. The dangers of vicarious material consumption is that it can be used as a smokescreen protecting our sensibilities from the more ethically questionable environmental and social violence it can do. The act of collecting is not accessible to any one gender, women have collected for centuries, the difference is that women collectors have not been written about as much as men have. Traditionally, collecting had to do with being of the world, being out in the world, travelling, exploring and other boys' adventure fiction colonial stereotypes such as these, boys magazines appealed to getting your collecting badge at Scouts.[182] This means that historically it is men and boys who have been encouraged to collect for leisure and play in our patriarchal world. From a young age, picking up insects and stones, siting trains and piling up old magazines is considered more heteronormative for boys; this, in turn, has affected the cultural way we view both gender and collections and collecting. Prown suggests this negative gendered existence with objects around us is to do with material being seen as the "dirty things", and it is the

[180] McCallum. E. L. and Mikko Tuhkanen (2011) p.12
[181] Clarke, Paul (2013) p.378
[182] Nelson, Susuan and Myriam Risen-Ayalon (2001)

poetic, the cultural, the meaning that is applied later that is not to do with the practical dirty utilitarianism of the object and more to do with linguistic impressions upon them[183].

Leisure, Play and Consumption

The rituals of play, role-play and theatricality are afforded by space, time and money. We can particularly see this in the agency that it gives the collector to become a historian, to become a storyteller, a curator and an archaeologist as well as an artist through a narrative relation to objects. Hodgdon says: "Performance is made from a series of fragments, rearranged in an assemblage"[184] suggesting that each of us – historian, researcher, collector, artist are performing the self-reflexive filling of empty space, we are "conjuring"[185]. Collectors invest not only money, but ideas, energy (psychic, physical and spiritual) and time into collections, they are likely to become off-shoots of self as well as the body in the kinetic expenditure, the 'blood, sweat and tears', that is spent on a labour of love. Collecting can be seen as self-definition (or self-archiving) through emotion or devotion to a cause, much like religion or art: beyond culture. Andre Lepecki believes that the impulse to collect or to archive is grounded the what he calls the "paranoic", a fear of the failure to document something properly for posterity or remembrance. He quotes Hal Foster on practice-as-research: "A will to archive" echoes […] "archival impulse" in contemporary art. Referring to an artist's "will 'to connect what cannot be connected,'" equivalent to "a will to relate" and "to probe a misplaced past" […] "archival impulse" as directly resulting from a current "failure in cultural memory" produced by our "society of control"" [186].

At its foundation, collecting is voluntary, grounded in will and impulse and therefore equated to freedom: it is leisurely even if it is "paranoic". In its pursuit of narrative through design with objects, the motivation for and culture of collecting is playful[187]. It is an imaginative past time that gives

[183] Prown, Jules David (1982) p.2
[184] Hodgdon, Barbara (2016) p.104
[185] Ibid p.106
[186] Lepecki, Andre (2010) p.30
[187] Pearce, Susan (1993) p.50

collectors the pleasurable illusion that other times and spaces/places are accessible to them. As Anthony Jackson points out, claiming this possibility to access the past is erroneous and damaging to potentially more broadly informed histories: "The counter-view is that this claim is at best misleading ('because it creates a false sense that it is possible to "know the truth" about past realities') and at worst deceptive ('because it substitutes contemporary fantasies about the past for artefacts and evidence')"[188]. It is often conducted outside of the individual's everyday work whether it is based on their work or not, collectors are not necessarily paid for the act of collecting. Although they may be paid for the exchange or sale of the objects in isolation, rarely are they esteemed financially for their efforts. The 'labour of love' represents the free will to gain a spiritual satisfaction through the spending of energy, time and emotion; it is intangible and phenomenological much like the act of play itself:

> Collecting is as messy and chancy as all human activities, full of false starts, changes of heart and unforeseeable disasters, which means that objects take their chances of success just as we do ourselves, and for all kinds of reasons, many once collected objects fall back into the two other groups ['rubbish' or 'transient'][189]

A keen collector may seek to unearth lost objects from the charity shops, thrift and second hands stores and back offices of various traders and institutions; to dust off what one has deemed rubbish and restore it to their own idea of cultural/aesthetic use, imbued with a "poetics"[190] of personal value to add to a collection or sell for one. Personal collections will often have contents that swing across this "rubbish - transient - durable" spectrum set out by Rheims' and Prown and Kotpyoff. Eric Jones Evans' Collection, for example, has in one box an envelope of tiny scraps of disintegrating paper folded around eerily preserved clippings of children's hair, a common Victorian practice but on first inspection one could easily mistake it for "rubbish"[191]. Then in the next box there are the stage dueling pistols that Henry Irving used at the Lyceum, lovingly acquired (probably at great expense) and kept by Jones Evans in their original case. Jones Evans is holding monuments to ephemeral moments dear in his collection and these can be projected upon very different materials indeed. On the other hand, the more politicised "rubbish" in the artificial agenda of the Women's Theatre Collection which is mainly made up of

[188] Jackson, Anthony (2010) p.204
[189] Rheims, Maurice (1961) p.35
[190] Prown, Jules David (1982) p.5
[191] See Chapter 3

unbound typescripts, hand written research notes, scribblings and unpublished plays, suggests that what may have been forgotten has now been collected and, en mass, has a formidable appearance. Hodgdon lists some of the "mad fragments"[192] that create this similar effect of self-archiving just by stumbling one's way through research projects: "Scribbles on ever smaller pieces of paper, indecipherable notes written on coffee-stained post its; fragments, sounds and thoughts remembered when waking and as quickly forgotten. When gathered together, such scraps, scribbles, drawings and fragments might be called an object biography that reflects on performance processes, explores their historical density."[193] Hodgdon gives these oft unconsidered scraps a life-cycle, an occupation and a meaning: the narrative of individual use. This may also apply to the literal rubbish being used by the Desperate Men, the business collection I explore in Chapter 3, to make their props and costumes as they recycle and up-cycle to produce their own brand of ironically accomplished but hodgepodge aesthetic.

One way of deducing this via ideas of freedom of choice as it can help us measure play as an imperative as it highlights the gaming nature of the act, the in-urgency of the performance: a 'treasure hunt' as opposed to a necessary hunt for the survival of people who are without leisure or access, the privileges of time, space and money. Is the nature of the human provenance of archival objects politically and economically charged? The clash between those with means deciding value in culture and the excesses of consumer culture and capitalist economies sees mass production prompting the subjective production of 'rubbish' in the simulacra or discarded 'other' to the coveted 'original', pristine or 'beautiful'. Developing countries often see the poor making a small living out of the cast-offs of our consumer culture in the rubbish dumps of our propensity for 'play'[194]. A morbid reminder of the problematic human relationships with things is the all too common sight of homeless people with shopping trollies piled high with found and kept objects in locations of extremely varying states of economic development which mirror the attitudes and behaviours of consumer and Capitalist culture. This represents to us what a haptic relationship with materials can mean to being-in-the-world. Whatever

[192] Steedman, Carolyn (1998) p.68
[193] Hodgdon, Barbara (2016) p.4
[194] Zizek, Slavoj (2006) p.17.

one's living situation, to perform ownership is empowering in its delusion of security behind things as well as imitating identity through what precisely one owns. Prown, as mentioned earlier suggests that collecting has its foundation in man's impulse to master matter, to intellectualise, make disappear with poetry and ideas, to get one's hands dirty, dusty, to hoard is dirty work but one can produce a diamond from the rough, apply poetry to give the illustration that it is not just mess:

> Material things are heir to all sorts of ills-they break, get dirty, smell, wear out; abstract ideas remain pristine, free from such worldly debilities. The Western conception of history is that it has been characterized by man's increasing under-standing and mastery of the physical environment, by the progressive triumph of mind over matter. The evidence of human history seems to confirm our sense that abstract, intellectual, spiritual elements are superior to material and physical things. This has led inevitably to a hierarchical ordering that informs our apprehension and judgment of human activities and experiences.[195]

The economics and politics of collecting serve to further establish the depth of what researchers can really deduce from collected objects about how the collector identified with the items and what narratives have been formed and can be formed beyond their current presence in the archive. This public side of the archive, the museums, are institutions of the privileges of study and leisure which have broad histories of failing to appeal to all people that contribute to human history and heritage: "Collecting is a story, and everyone needs to tell it. Yet, it is obvious that not every human being is, or can afford to be, a collector. The essentialising gesture obscures the class privilege that is thereby projected on the human species as a whole."[196]

Collecting engages with many of the facets of performance and the everyday phenomenon of living: role-playing, story-telling, improvisation, imaginative vision, fantasy, creation, ritual and production/consumption. For this reason, Pearce suggest that collecting can be considered a sport[197]. It is as much of an endurance, durational and productive performance as any game. It demonstrates the indistinguishable nature of practice and theory within social ritual activity. Eric Jones Evans' playful joy and gaming spirit comes through in the way he has hand-written notes and scribbled directly on to a vast quantity of his collected items offering amusing anecdotes about events and nicknames or how

[195] Prown, Jules David (1982) p.2
[196] Bal, Mieke (1993) p.103
[197] Pearce, Susan (1993) p.61

he came across the particular object, even displays of emotion about his family. He receives gifts, he discusses humour in memories and anecdotes: he shares. Collectors must extend the collecting spirit to other owners of relevant objects and eventually move to share the 'product' of the collection. In practice, this is done using correspondence, discussions, meetings and exhibition or display, all part of the journey of collecting; objects have a story to impart and the collector is in a fantastical role-play with the past and so the researcher in their archival studies is too:

> An object's date is of prime importance to a collector with an obsession for the past. He values it for its associations, that it once belonged and was handled by a man he can visualise as himself. The object bear's witness: its possession is an introduction to history. One of a collector's most entrancing day-dreams is the imaginary joy of uncovering the past in the guise of an archeologist. [198]

Art Historian, Maurice Rheims, suggest that making history via collecting is our "day-dream" "of uncovering the past", our imaginary play with objects. The collector is both performer of ideas through collecting and audience for other collectors' work sometimes competitive but mostly social and inter-subjective. The philosophical ideal of the socio-psychic connect within collectives of humans can be seen contemporaneously in the growing culture of collectors' conventions. Particularly interesting is the vast and expanding popularity of "Geek Culture" which has at its centre the celebration of collecting computer games, table top games, comic books and graphic novels, science-fiction and fantasy genre ephemera at large scale, global conventions. In their psychological investigation into this ever-increasing phenomenon, Jessica McCain, Brittany Gentile and W. Keith Campbell tell us: "Geeks gain belongingness by rallying around the resources that are currently available: consumer goods and cultural artefacts […] hypotheses were supported by findings that geeks use knowledge of geek interests (e.g. *Star Trek* trivia) and collections (e.g. model spaceships) as social currency." [199] At these conventions, collectors form "relationships based around previously solitary activities" (McCain et al) and it is often customary to dress-up as your favourite characters (e.g 'Cos-Play' or Costume Play) and buy and swap collector's items as well as occasionally interact in character. These conventions

[198] Rheims, Maurice (1961) p.211
[199] McCain, Gentile et al (2015)

http://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0142200.

demonstrate taking the play, leisure, gaming, creativity, fantasy and imagination of creating a performative narrative through collections and collecting to their almost infantilised and primitive drive for happiness, well-being or contentment. Through this fantasy of belonging, collectors achieve something similar to Rheims' "day-dream" of archeological prowess from possession. Pearce mentions the emotional aspects of play with collecting:

> In the playing of games, separateness from the world is not loneliness, because for the time all players suspend other differences and unite to create for each other an identity and a security. Collectors, who sometimes feel that their possessive streak is excessive or childish, value this reassuring sense of community, and have always used the devices of correspondence, discussion, visits and formal meeting places to establish it.[200]

It appears that whether the collection's format and agenda is business, artificial, personal, family or academic they all have this paradox of leisure in common. Their submission of collections to archives may be part of this "belongingness", finding an audience to appreciate them through their interests. These migrations towards and away and into varying proximity with people and objects based on a personal and cultural ideal is what what Ahmed's queer phenomenology is founded in: "orientation is for me about how the bodily, the spatial, and the social *are entangled*."[201]

Inevitably, due to collecting's often solitary and clandestine nature, Baudrillard has likened this play element of collecting to a sexual one of love, drive and satisfaction that he believes borders on but does not transcend the boundaries of fetishism:

> The practice of collecting is not equivalent to a sexual practice, in so far as it does not seek to still a desire (as does fetishism). Nonetheless it can bring about a reactive satisfaction that is every bit as intense. In which case, the object in question should undoubtedly be seen as a 'loved object'. Even in cases where no fetishistic perversion is involved, they will maintain about their collection an aura of the clandestine, of confinement, secrecy and dissimulation, all of which give rise to the unmistakable impression of a guilty relationship.[202]

[200] Pearce, Susan (1993) p.51
[201] Ahmed, Sara (2006) p.181
[202] Baudrillard, Jean (1994) p.9

This "clandestine", "guilty" approach to collecting can lead to personal exclusivities and elitisms that result in the archived objects being less accessible for a comprehension of history. Archaeologist, Michael Shanks, finds this abhorrent: "the aesthetic artefact is an escape from the nightmares of history"[203]. It is too important be able to access the politics behind materials of historic interest to consider the romance of man's relationship to a "loved object". Shanks feels this negates the archaeology of deciphering materials as artefacts: "Archaeology is precisely the means to a 'living' past. The past has to be buried alive, experience killed off, stultified, pinned down to the moment of its novelty in order to be meaningful in the present as information, a permanent commodity, property, heritage all preserved, pickled for the future."[204] Freshwater however, refers to Shanks' approach to this antiquarianism suggesting that, "for him this relation to the past is a voyeuristic violation, a pornography."[205] Perhaps one person's fetishism is another's politics. The specificity of potential behaviour towards the act of collecting and the subsequent affect on the choice of objects to be shared in archives could be illuminating in themselves. For example, with reference to the Tree Family Archive which I explore in chapter 3, the solitary pursuit of Maud Tree's diaries and correspondence hoarding can be viewed as a memorial to time passed but also perhaps the frustration to communicate, generally in a time when women were not expected to articulate themselves publically in genteel society but also personally as a woman seemingly neglected by her husband[206]. We may also read this frustration to reach out in the very different common goal of the academics and playwrights who collected for the Women's Theatre Collection; coming together to relieve the silencing of the valuable world of unpublished women's theatre, a social push to communicate through the institutionalised silencing. Shanks, Freshwater and Baudrillard enter into a discourse on the effect of the private and public of archives in relation to social history by referring to varying levels of extremism in historiographical interest here.

On the other hand, the measuring of one's self and ideas/emotions/ideologies through things could be

[203] Shanks, Michael (1987) p.90
[204] Ibid, p.92
[205] Freshwater, Helen (2003) p.10
[206] See chapter 3 for more detail.

seen as part of the problematic of private and public in collecting and collections. This brings to mind the Marxist term "commodity fetishism" which appears in *Das Capital* in 1915 in which Marx suggests that the brain and body attach themselves to objects of social value according to hierarchies marked out by the possession of money: “The productions of the human brain appear as independent being endowed with life, and entering into relation both with one another and the human race. So it is the world of commodities with the products of men's hands. This I call the fetishism which attaches itself to the products of labour, so soon as they are produced as commodities, and which is therefore inseparable from the production of commodities.”[207] There is a transition of objects from utility to aesthetic that happens in collecting for Marx that can be psychologised by the act of forgetting. Forgetting the human labour behind the coming of the object into the world and therefore allowing for the perversion of objects to come to only really represent collateral because one has the freedom of capital/lack of conscience to do so: forgetting, therefore, being dangerous and violent in consequence for social history[208].

The community, the social interaction, the unspoken rules, the quiet and the gentle pace, the mutual understanding and trust of the archive is all part of a game, the 'spirit' of the archive. If this game is not disrupted by the ancient white, Western, male bureaucracy of the “archive”[209] the players take comfort in one another's comprehension of this 'labour of love', 'passionate pursuit' and 'leisure activity': “Collections are objects of love, but they are also objects of dominance and control”[210]. The danger and tension that seems to be created between the private/public, play/structure and tangible/imaginary is due to the emotional/spiritual, economic/academic foundations for collecting. Collecting is a freedom to sort material in sameness and difference, assonance and dissonance and the satisfaction afforded by this process[211]. Collections are the human desire for order and the demonstration of their inability to maintain it, it is the result of their general interaction with environment. “In the West, collecting has

[207] Marx, Karl (1970) p.203
[208] Shanks, Michael (2001)
[209] Derrida, Jacques (1996) p.1
[210] Pearce, Susan (1993) p.51
[211] Freeman, Elizabeth (2010) p.139 “Erotohistorigraphy”

long been a strategy for the deployment of a possessive self, culture, and authenticity."[212] It can also be seen as personal trajectory, a way carving your own mark, patterning your groove based on your individual orientation, as is the way we then read them for ourselves. A pleasant metaphor used by Ahmed moves away from the violence of fetish, power and objectification saying:

> It is interesting to note that in landscape architecture they use the term 'desire lines' to describe unofficial paths, those marks left on the ground that show everyday comings and goings where people deviate from the paths they are supposed to follow. Deviation leaves its own marks on the ground, which can even help generate alternative lines which cross the ground in unexpected ways.[213]

Perhaps by reconsidering the act of collecting, the cultural meaning of objects and the subjectivity of research as potentially dangerous in terms of how it can affect social power dynamics will help us to be more consistently aware of what we are also not doing in terms of reading and writing history, what we are forgetting. To deviate from the set paths a little and observe personal "desire" or "interest" may be to find voices for the quieter narratives in the archive collections.

Life-Cycle of Objects

Since, the act of collecting bears resemblance to the sorting of everyday life experiences into narratives: internally or externally, psychically or physically, conscious or unconscious the process of location, reading, collation and allocation is how we textualise our daily story. We accumulate sensorially, imaginatively and culturally, the human consciousness essentially 'collects' from birth to death. We have established that, broadly speaking, we are all in possession of the impulse to collect as a movement towards ownership, knowledge, comprehension, order and control of the world around us, each individual is endowed with a varying set of references that inform the narrative sought and produced in order to gain and impart knowledge. The drive to mark, iterate, memorialise, remember and ground are end goals in collecting and this is exercised through the achievement of perceived completion, contentment, or perfection. As producers, owners and keepers of collections, collectors employ meta-narrative techniques to formalise their cause, consciously or unconsciously, using repetition, manipulation, emphasis, playing-down, ignoring, omitting or exacerbating as narrative storytelling

[212] Clifford (1988) p.52
[213] Ahmed, Sara (2006) p.20

devices. Walter Benjamin, writes: “Memory […] is not an instrument for exploring the past but its theatre.”[214] We frame, re-frame and creatively manipulate time, history and reception through artistic means using archives. We produce layers of performance that we act out as ‘curators’ to suggest remembrance. The frequency, placement, categorisation and state of objects in a collection are indicators of meta-narrative that could be usefully critically analysed by researchers of history through archives both specialized and in general.

The reinforcement of meta-narratives or awareness of cultural narrative trends through collecting, and further still, the archive and museum's treatment of collections, have reciprocal trajectories. The everyday study and interpretation of the contemporary world is based on comparison with previous times and our comprehension of patterns of past behaviour. The conservation and presentation of social ideals becomes part of the mutual inter-textual relationship between collector and researcher: archive and cultural context. Contextualising archival processes is described by Karin Dannehl in a break-down of an archeological model for interpreting an object's life-cycle:

> A sub-category of the life-cycle model is the life cycle assessment study. Such a study sets out to examine the entire life cycle of the product, including extraction and processing of raw materials, manufacturing, transportation and distribution, use, re-use, maintenance, recycling and final disposal. The insights derived from the approach are instructive. They show, for instance, that the greatest degree of uniformity in the life cycle of a product is naturally found at the point of production, where technical knowledge of making tends to be relatively standardised, while the greatest variation is found at the user end of the career path or life cycle, where users' individuality, their freedom of choice, and the specific parameters within which they use an object will determine a great range of uses, or performances.[215]

Archival researchers concentrate most rigorously on this second main stage of the life-cycle of an object, "the user end of the career path", deciphering context from the presentness of objects in the collection box and linking them associatively to the theatre and performance of the past that they perceive they represent. These "performances" that the object can be engaged in depends on the individual's "freedom of choice" to apply their reading in a certain way. Dannehl suggests that this life-

[214] Benjamin, Walter (1936) p.230
[215] Dannehl, Karin (2009) p.124

cycle is like a 'career path', a continuous and mutable journey. This illuminates our constant influence on the life-cycle of objects as we project our contemporary discourses and historical interests on to them. An example of this journey in the Women's Theatre Collection is a sub-collector, Ella Burra, who has a selection of cigarette cards that are photographs of actresses of the late 19th century in character: a marketing strategy that saw mass-produced copies of images included in cigarette packages to increase sales. Burra has collected them, seemingly because they are women on the commercial stage as there is no other apparent link between them, perhaps this was her personal interest or they were inspiration for her work in theatre. This practice does fit in to another whole world of collecting cigarette cards that did not need such an agenda, so do we risk projecting? As a researcher I now behold them and comprehend them as examples of Burra's interest in the remembrance of women in theatre at the Fin de Siècle but this may be because they are part of the Women's Theatre Collection which has the active agenda not to forget women's theatre. The "career path" of these objects is nuanced, the photograph most probably created for promotional reasons and has gone through at least three different meanings from Burra's hand to mine. This should encourage us to be vigilant as to what we are doing *to* the object in research. Bal goes so far as to call it "violence":

> Modern semiotic vocabulary employed: objects are inserted into the narrative perspectives when their status is turned from object-ive to semiotic, from thing to sign, from collapse to separation of thing and meaning, or from presence to absence. The object is turned away, abducted, from itself, its inherent value, and denuded of its defining function so as to be available for use as a sign. I use the words 'abducted' and 'denuded' purposefully; they suggest that the violence done to the objects might have a gendered quality.[216]

The treatment of objects as having a "gendered quality" is not so far a jump since archiving, exploring, 'discovery' and collecting has been a traditionally colonial, patriarchal pursuit, but Bal's ideas of the negation of possible meanings to be deciphered by others from objects after the 'violence' of destructive interpretation should be considered a real danger. To assume, confirm, reject and consolidate meaning to an object is to potentially stunt its life-cycle by defining it too rigidly. Nevertheless, as Derrida infers through his "Death Drive"[217], to archive is to consistently destroy and re-build and re-appropriate stuff in the name of history and thus for collecting. We perceive the life-cycle of objects to be performed by

[216] Mieke Bal (1994) p.111
[217] Derrida, Jacques (1995) p.7

the objects, in our haptic relation with them, through various linguistic means but it is the objects that textualise us to be read for our context, forcing us to consider how we perform in and of the world.

Museums, in particular, hold part of this cultural responsibility for forming historical narratives since they are institutions that not only concentrate on holding and conserving objects but displaying them for posterity, they are the access, sharing and dissemination point for the public: a creative voice constructed to encourage further interpretation[218]. Collectors, researchers, conservators, auctioneers, antique dealers, curators, cataloguers and museum visitors also contribute their narrative choices for history based on their own social awareness in the act of beholding objects within their new contextual space and time. The perceived and shared historic, cultural, scientific or aesthetic value of objects is the result of a social reflection: where have we been, where are we now, where do we want to go? These narrative decisions made by museums are based on an economy of loss of heritage always deteriorating, changing political meaning and moving forward. Individuals have the freedom to re-write these stories based upon personal association, making archive collections both a private and public matter: "the ways in which performances remain, as well as disappear, not as objects or documents but held in memory" [219]. Collecting is the practical performance of this responsibility, the act of turning conceived theories on history and heritage into practice through re-informed, re-enacted performance with objects. In Sean Hides' article "The Genealogy of Material Culture and Cultural Identity" he posits that at all times we must be aware of our performance of cultural linguistics in critical analysis of objects, people, events and places both in the everyday and in creative arts:

> The pre-conceptual frameworks (epistemes) through which our culture orders the material and social worlds have changed through time and are themselves specific to each time and culture. This affects not merely the interpretation of evidence, or the articulation of subjective influences with material data, but the very fabric of our understanding. The concepts and modes of analysis through which we interpret the past are not neutral, abstract tools; they are cultural products. [220]

Hides points out that we must investigate the systems of understanding and knowledge that are specific

[218] Bennett, Susan (2006) p.73
[219] Clarke, Paul (2013) p.369
[220] Hides, Sean (1997) p.29

to the certain time that objects are perceived to have originated from and how they change accordingly through time since these nuances are "cultural products" themselves. This can begin to allow us to isolate and analyse the reasons why the objects were chosen for collection and what affect this knowledge has on our subsequent reading of history. To reiterate Hides, the specific 'epistemes' to each time and culture: "affects not merely the interpretation of evidence, or the articulation of subjective influences with material data, but the very fabric of our understanding". The Arnold Ridley and Eric Jones Evans collections, for example, have objects from across most of the twentieth century. They both begin by keeping everything, much like the Fin de Siècle efforts of Maud Beerbohm Tree, perhaps this is a reflects the strong culture of collecting from the nineteenth century but as the century goes on the objects become more specifically culturally representative. Of course, this may also be to do with the collectors ageing or becoming more aware of the potential significance of their collections as a whole or they may have come to realise the specific agenda and intention of their collections and so narrate accordingly.

The theoretical stances, ideological idylls and conceptual choices of our everyday *become* our creative practice in reading/writing history through archive collections and the same goes for the reverse[221]. Kate Dorney discusses this from a curatorial and cataloguing perspective: "historiographical practice should be perpetually aware of the hazards of description and arrangement, and it's hard to do that well if you're following the arc of your own research narrative in everything you acquire, catalog, and display"[222]. Labelling an exhibition case, for example, is a loaded task, one must appease the research interests of the institution for which one is working, placate one's own personal politics or risk feeling oppressed, and appeal to accessibility for the audience/visitor. A palimpsest of translations exists for each collection object and the complexity of establishing *one* meaning suggests that this is actually highly improbable:

> Both in the production and in the reception, subjectivity is the bottom line [...] Cultural objects must signify through common codes, conventions of meaning-making that both

[221] Pearce, Susan (1997)
[222] Dorney, Kate (2010) p.7

> producer and reader understand. That is why they have to be inter-subjectively accessible. A culture consists of the people who share enough of these conventions to exchange their views (*inter*-subjectively), so that making cultural artefacts is worth some subject's while.[223]

Now that we have explored the inevitability of subjectivity in history reading and writing it is important to move on with a wider exploration of the need for what Bal calls "inter-subjectivity" in historical narratives. Since inter-subjectivity goes some way towards explaining the tacit idea of researching 'spirit', the attempt to connect with others through stories, it seems important to consider questions like: how inter-subjectively accessible is the collector's work on their collation of objects for collection? And how inter-subjective is the researcher's own reading of a collection for history and to what effect?

By exploring how performativity offers us a framework through which to comprehend how we phenomenologically interact with others through our engagement with materials we have looked at what the collector and researcher *do to* objects in order to employ them to communicate socially and artistically through play, connection, possession, power, control and legacy. We have also seen not only how these figures in archival study can serve to manipulate the possible meanings of items held for historical research but how the objects can be made to act as a “message-bearing entity”, comparing their use in collection to their previous context as “intrinsic sign" and encouraging them through narrative application to become "metaphorical symbol."[224] However, in impressing the importance of “inter-subjective” exchange in contributing to historical discourse we must be careful not to project too fervently our visions of the collector's possible emotions as these are essentially unknowable. As a guideline for thought, however, I would argue that it may help us to comprehend possible reasons for archival choices made. With the Maud Beerbohm Tree collection, for example, one is hard pushed not to feel some empathy towards her as she pleads to her 27 year old self in her Wednesday 2nd July 1890 diary entry: "Feel low and miserable and very tired - must not be too young and frisky. Let me try and read and think and learn and not always be wanting excitement. Let me build up something for old age - which comes so soon, so inexorably". This may, however, be the collective result of the intimate

[223] Bal, Mieke (1994) p.98
[224] Pearce, Susan (1993) p.26

nature of the objects that are chosen for a family collection: diaries, correspondence, obituary clippings. In the singular, it may be that Maud Tree included this diary for theatrical effect, intending to emotionally affect its onlookers.

Archaeologically, archival research is a game of make-believe, a puzzle of fragments of information so we must be aware of what is not there, to counter our emotions: other people's perspectives, which can make it dangerous to be too reactionary to our reception of objects. Jackson, in his critical analysis of performance in heritage sites says: "Truly educational approaches to history are to do with generating a spirit of curiosity, enquiry and engagement, a recognition of the differences and similarities between present and past, and with showing that history is as much about lived experience as it is about dates, buildings and artefacts."[225] and that "immersion in a story is a powerful means of generating engagement and curiosity."[226] This immersion in historical narrative then is important, what Hodgdon calls, "dreamwork", or dream weaving[227]. To reflect on one's experiences with source data creatively and continue in this vain in the dissemination of findings can at the very least offer the authenticity needed to make people talk about it and question it. Prown however, is wholly afraid of the "danger"[228] of personalized aestheticizing of material for historical consideration:

> The aesthetic dilemma does not in fact arise from analysis; it arises from speculation. The aesthetic experience of a work of art (or music or literature) can be affected, even permanently altered, by external associations-a distasteful experience at the time of perception, the intrusion of a parody, an unsolicited, uncongenial interpretation. Speculation, especially by an "expert," can color, perhaps permanently, the perception of others. Regardless of the validity of the interpretation, the state of mind of the listener or reader is altered, innocence is lost, what has been said cannot be unsaid, the aesthetic experience is irredeemably changed.[229]

Is this "innocence lost" a danger to be avoided or an ontological certainty of broad historiographical investigation? Any historian's attempt to make meaning from archive collections for history could benefit from being aware of these ontological shifts as they can inform the developmental potential of

[225] Jackson, Anthony (2010) p.202
[226] Ibid, p.210
[227] Hodgdon, Barbara (2016) p.4
[228] Prown, Jules David (1982) p.13
[229] Ibid.

one's comprehension of contextual information. The act of collecting and the act of researching share the act of reading objects for posterity. The choices made in meaning making in this way can in turn be read for their varying cognitions and behaviors with materials as contexualising agendas, ideologies and intentions. Identifying this can aid us in moving on from prescriptive and potentially damaging or derogatory histories, can release us from straight, White, male paths. Ahmed calls this move away from the silencing of marginal perspectives, "to disturb the order of things"[230]. The empowerment to do this comes, she says, from viewing the world from a queer perspective: "Queer referring to non-normative sexualities involves a personal and social commitments to living in an oblique world, or in a world that has an oblique angle in relation to that which is given."[231]. Human subjects have grown to be self-interrogative as we have become aware of our visual and material culture and the representative signs that we use to communicate with have become more complex and vast. This is the crux of how we re-enact time in creative play with objects, for example, through exhibition in museums and other media. Paul Clarke's Performance Re-enactment Society did it using bodies as the media (as well as photography as documentation) in "Untitled Performance Stills", when participants re-embody memories of performance through "emulation" of what they remember from their own spectatorship. Clarke posits re-enactment as like to emulation, like play with notions of time saying, "re-enactment enables a 'past-present' to be repeated differently for them, now."[232] In this example, "the body in re-enactment becomes a kind of archive, one of the remains of an art-historical event and a host to cultural memory."[233]

The various ontologies the archive demonstrated here through exploring how the body interacts with material and memory performatively allow us to read the history of our own performance in the understanding of the changing life cycle of objects and so comprehend history both backwards and forwards through collections. Bal's "inter-subjectively accessible"[234] storytelling asks of us to share small stories to make a bigger impact. Halberstam shares this as part of her manifesto for her book on

[230] Ahmed, Sara (2008) p.161
[231] Ibid.
[232] Clarke, Paul (2013) p.373
[233] Ibid
[234] Bal, Mieke (1994) p.99

queer history and time in performance saying, "I believe in making a difference by thinking little thoughts and sharing them widely."[235] This is a positive sentiment for making things familiar to many so that they can express their familiarity and disseminate stories memorably as well as broadly – appealing to the human nature of our relationship with objects.

[235] Halberstam, Judith (2011) p.21

Section Two

Performativity of Archival Research

Moving further within the theoretical and conceptual investigation of archival studies using the collector – object – researcher triangulation, this section develops the idea that performance studies can offer new ways of interacting with these archive collections. It will discuss how ideas and concepts of 'performativity' inform the practical methodology explored for this thesis and the theories that ground my approach in the discipline of theatre and performance. The objective is to investigate how conceptions of performance including: play, sensory perception, practice, evidence, storytelling, anecdote, subjectivism, exhibition, material culture, narrative, access, diversification, inclusivity and cross-disciplinarity affect our awareness of the relationship between the body, the object and subsequently, history from the acts of collecting, archiving and research. The second half of this chapter will explain the importance of the collectors' and the researcher's personal and individual engagements with objects, evaluating the presentness and corporeality of the body in this process of 'reading' objects for historical posterity. In three sections based on various issues that were raised in my own research encounters: subjectivism and evidence, the body in engagement with material and creative dissemination of ideas, the chapter will move to establish performativity as a key concept for progress in archival research.

The second section of this chapter will now interrogate more closely the performativity of archival research looking at evidence and anecdote. Referencing debates on the validity of imaginative vision and creativity in historical research and writing. It will go on to look at the inevitability of self-identity, the individual and the personal in the exercise of history writing. How the ego in both collecting and researching may be present and affecting how we curate personalised histories through research and thus where we may locate authenticity in this process. This will address how fear and anxiety of speculative history writing, of "archival violence"[236], can affect the need for patience, method, pace and detail for rigorous study. Questioning our engagement with historical 'gap-filling' in archival research

[236] Derrida, Jacques (1995) p.7

and where we then reside in relation to cultural violence, colonialism and objectification in pursuit of ideas of 'origin', 'truth', 'fact', 'reality', 'knowns' and 'discovery'.

Having located ourselves in relation to historiographical ontologies of archival material and dissemination, what of the physical engagement with the collections? What happens when we use touch or 'surface-to-surface' (body to material) interaction? How does "haptic historiography"[237] enlist our awareness and comprehension of objects of historical interest through the corporeality of encounter? Through a discussion of elements of play, sensorial reception and the practice of research; covering the implementation of the body as a productive site of resonance in research within archives this chapter will then conclude by questioning current practices in archival research and historical dissemination in museums and galleries. Play with wear, touch, movement and immersion as a way of foregrounding agency and authenticity and sensorial awareness in archives is a controversial and therefore important area to grapple with.

By way of introduction to theoretical ideas, I would like to refer to a practical performance within which all of the main structural focusses of this chapter outlined above come under investigation. In September 2011, Artist in Residence at the University of Bristol Theatre Collection, Clare Thornton's created a performance installation and exhibition called *Unfurl*[238]. The installation was located opposite the Univeristy of Bristol Theatre Collection at the Red Lodge Museum, a 16th century residential building, and based on the recent Mander & Mitchenson acquisition to the UoBTC: "The performance involves unravelling over one kilometre of ribbon throughout three hours, gradually obscuring the performer and model who sits waiting for his painter; the audience are free to come and go as they please."[239] This piece seemed to experiment with spaces, places, bodies and objects as representative of a simultaneity of stories where anecdote is always significant. The idea of unfurling time was inspired by the artist's

[237] Freeman, Elizabeth (2009) p.8
[238] ClareThornton.com, Theatre Collection Inaugural Artist in Residence, University of Bristol Theatre Collection, Unfurl: A work in two parts, performance installation and exhibition.
[239] University of Bristol Theatre Collection celebrates 60th anniversary with first Artist in Residence http://www.bristol.ac.uk/news/2011/7845.html

interest in the recurring motif of the ruche or pleat in the fabrics of costumes and images within the Mander & Mitchenson collection that speak of movement: the continual consecutive exposure and disappearance of light in a ruff or a draping gown came to represent the ebb and flow of time. This piece went on to form its own growing palimpsest of documentation all based on a creative response to history through the archive collection:

> A photograph documenting this unique performance will be exhibited at the Red Lodge Museum during Bristol Open Doors day on Saturday 10th September, and then will be permanently accessioned into the Theatre Collection's holdings.[240]

This is a practical example of the continuous performance of collections through awareness to their presence, interpretations of significance in relation to different contexts and subjective relations and their literal use by the body (researcher).

[240] theatrebristol.net 'University of Bristol Theatre Collection celebrates 60th Anniversary with First Artist in Residence' posted 18/08/11.

Fig 5. The Red Lodge, 2011 performance of 'Unfurl' by Clare Thornton. Picture by (c) Clare Thornton & Zoe Childerley. The performer is Rogelio Vallejo.

This project demonstrated how historiography is an unquantifiable 'unravelling' process of various subjective narratives and can help us in contemplating the necessity for evidence in a telling of history, favouring the random personal reflections of the visitor to the exhibition performance as well as that of the artist/historian/researcher herself. In "Performing the Archive", Paul Clarke asks what of performance history that is mobile from the passing on of personal memories:

> We're interested in the ways in which performances remain, as well as disappear, not as objects or documents but held in memory, remembered collectively between communities of those who were there and circulating, as much as rumours and word-

> of-mouth accounts as in the form of published photographs. […] We're interested in placing audience members in the frame, valuing their perspectives and accounts of their experiences as much as those of the artist, academic, critic or curator.[241]

What use and value has this historiography of experience? Why are we not using it? This would be a queer rift in our concept of linear time, a critical "turn"[242], a deep cut and a deviation or disruption of how we are used to looking at archives for performance, as if the body were one itself. Hodgdon calls it "stealing"[243] from the ephemeral moment which we would then have to re-appropriate. This performance of and in the layers of history is introduced by Wise and Wise as they discuss the various guises that, Berlin's "Peacock Island" took over the centuries: ""History unrolls the palimpsest of mental evolution," says the *Oxford English Dictionary*. Although the metaphor derives from the canonical palimpsest of a parchment subjected to writing and writing over, it is appropriate for other objects whose form and meaning result from a history of shaping and reshaping, such as rocks subjected to the forces of fire and water."[244] It is this unrolling that we continue as we write history from archival research, fresh with "rumours" and "word of mouth accounts"[245].

Evidence and Anecdote

> To collect is to launch individual desire across the intertext of environment and history. Every acquisition, whether crucial or trivial, marks an unrepeatable conjuncture of subject, found object, place and moment. In its sequential evolution, the collection encodes an intimate narrative, tracing what Proust calls 'le fil des heures, l'orde des annees et des mondes' – the continuous thread which selfhood is sewn into the unfolding fabric of a lifetime's experience.[246]

In his article "Collecting and Collage Making: The Case of Kurt Schwitters", Roger Cardinal also conceptualizes time as something to be unfurled in this explanation of how historical narrative is played with through collecting by painting and threading found details that reflect the self into our interpretation and sharing of it. Cardinal discusses how the collector begins with "individual desire",

[241] Clarke, Paul (2013) p.369
[242] Davis, Tracy C. (2008) p.1
[243] Hodgdon, Barnara (2016) p.2
[244] Wise and Wise (2004) p.101
[245] Clarke, Paul (2013) p.369
[246] Cardinal, Roger (1994) p.68

the motivation to share stories, passions and experiences. There is then the "unrepeatable conjuncture of subject, found object, place and moment", the ephemeral moment of encounter between body and material in collating objects which leads to the finished collection that "encodes an intimate narrative". I would argue that this system of personalized creativity with objects in collecting could be neatly transposed onto the act of research with archives except they then go on to recode the collection for the further sharing process as well. With Clare Thornton's performance piece in mind, it is useful to consider that, upon entry to a performance like this, audiences also participate in historical discourse as much as they would do as collector for or researcher from the archive. The sensations, memories and visceral responses to the presentness of live performance are all a kind of 'embedded documentation' in themselves. The roles of the collector, researcher, audience and performer are actually transferable particularly since there is a subsequent inevitability of having to explore the "selfhood [that] is sewn into the unfolding fabric of a lifetime's experience"[247] in their practices of individual physical presence with collected objects.

In our pursuit of the reception and dissemination of performance past we are all accountable for our actions now, in the present. Derrida calls this a 'responsibility for tomorrow': "a question of the future, the question of the future itself, the question of a response, of a promise and of a responsibility for tomorrow."[248] This is a collective and socialised "responsibility" for future histories that is born in the individual. Being aware of this responsibility can help researchers to recognise the meaning in both the integrated documentation, that which manifests from the presentness of the performance in operation and the subsidiary documentation, that of the audience/visitor/researcher's response to that presentness. Being aware of subjectivity and thus the potential for diversity of perception of the same event, collection, collector, item, narrative from individual to individual can aid us in homing in on and encouraging the regeneration of disempowered voices in past and present, being aware of every-body, including one's self, is taking "responsibility for tomorrow". So, in fathoming the collector's subjectivity we must therefore conceive of our own and thus the autobiography written in to every

[247] Ibid
[248] Derrida, Jacques (1995) p.36

comprehension of collection material for historical narratives. 'Evidence' becomes what the individual makes of it in this approach to autobiographical history writing. How they personally use their own anecdotes (subsidiary), how they 'read' collection objects (integrated) is what makes artefacts 'artefacts' (Latin - arte (art) and factum (something made) by a human being) or 'significant' in a historical study, having “aura”[249], be “interesting”[250].

To avoid stasis of ideas and embrace the impending changes that will occur to any perceived 'finalised' stories of the past one must be open to the level of subjectivity permitted in new histories particularly where the researcher has engaged haptically with archival materials to conduct these narratives. This may elicit concerns that histories could become unframed and poorly structured affecting the reliability of such a fragmented process. The body is not disciplined by academic boundaries and can tell us what it is really reading, from touching, to smelling, the sensorial meaning making from the performativity of haptic historiography is conceivably less containable. Adorno's idea that “it is foolish to keep the past untainted by the present's turbid flood”[251] helps to remind us that to attempt to regulate histories objectively is technically unobtainable and would be limiting, either way. He uses this watery metaphor to discuss the inevitability of change and 'damage' on memory, history, archive and time a simultaneously freeing and vertiginous effect of 'free-falling' in the study of history i.e. without the obduracy of the reliance on concepts of 'knowns' like evidence, origin and reality. Adorno references fore runner of modernity, Baudelaire, later on in his book: “Avalanche, veux-tu m'emporter dans ta chute”, roughly translated as, “Avalanche, will you take me in your fall”[252]. Although this was Baudelaire's contemporaneously symptomatic response to the fear of modernity, losing historical identity in the rapidly changing world of the early twentieth century, the dependence on subjectivity in history can feel uncannily like this to the traditional history scholar holding on to the 19th century ideals for objective historiography. The 'avalanche' issues a terrifying and murky lack of control; however, this analogy also helps us to visualise how the process of historical research as an “unravelling” is to

[249] Benjamin, Walter (1936) p.10
[250] Veyne, Paul (1984) p.17
[251] Adorno, Theodore (1951) p.167
[252] Ibid, p.159

move away from notions like 'the heart' or 'the truth' of the matter allowing research and documentation to be riddled with imperfections. Freshwater calls this "the recalcitrant, but dependable, 'thing': archival evidence"[253] as if it were always a defiantly niggling impulse for the historian. So, for ideas to flow we must accept the uncanny feeling of free-falling, washing, unfurling, unravelling, unfolding as they also motifs of growing or expanding and thus changing form.

Grayson Perry, in his exhibition, *Tomb of the Unknown Craftsman*, for the British Museum in 2011, observed the stark separation that still exists between the imaginative vision that is engaged in contemporary art, what he calls his "poem", and the archive exhibition: "My intuitive approach to curating is perhaps unsettling for some at an institution famed for deep and arcane knowledge and rigorous research"[254]. The artist was allowed to create an exhibition based on his own artistic and autobiographical findings and responses to collection objects and here Perry, justifiably, imagines that historians will call him an "ignorant fantasist making spurious connections"[255] because he is not a history scholar by expertise, yet both artist and historian engage in the same act in curating a museum exhibition. However much the scholarly historian, the chartered librarian or the archivist has learned, they have also had to make 'spurious connections' based on 'fantastical' judgments at some point in their profession, whether they admit or do not. One simply cannot refer directly to an absolute knowledge of what an object should come to represent about the past today or any definitive answer as to all the possible uses of an object in the past. Objects come to perform what we want of them for our own interpretation of history. Subjectivity versus scientific evidence is inevitable in history making although both can sit comfortably together. Freeman succinctly calls this conflict "reportage vs fiction"[256] which can help us to challenge and investigate the potential shift in the ontological make-up of history as it is created from reportage to fiction and back again. Ahmed tells us that this proposed inadequacy, the fiction, the speculation that we are in danger of impressing upon the discourse of history is what makes new ideas accessible: "It is a risk to read philosophy as a non-philosopher. When we

[253] Freshwater , Helen (2003) p.6
[254] Perry, Grayson (2011) p.11
[255] Ibid, p.12
[256] Freeman, Elizabeth (2010) p.123

don't have the resources to read certain texts, we risk getting things wrong by not returning them to the fullness of the intellectual histories from which they emerge. And yet we read. The promise of interdisciplinary scholarship is that the failure to return texts to their histories will do something." [257]

Bromfield and Cavanagh introduce their article *A Historiography of Informed Imagination* by laying down the laws for a historiography that does not rely on certainties:

> How, then, should a scholar address the problem of not knowing what occurred between a letter written in 1912 and one written in 1914? Since we don't know what happened between these two letters, we can either (1) make no speculation at all, (2) craft speculation that we defend as highly probable based upon available evidence, or (3) clearly mark the events that occur between the two letters as fiction. The first option reduces the function of historiography to data gathering. The second option operates on the pretence that speculation carries the same weight and serves the same function as "evidence." The third option (the one we are exploring here) acknowledges the ethical imperative of historians to make themselves visible in the narrative in order to counter the belief that they are writing what actually happened. In addition, this option has heuristic value, provoking otherwise unconsidered insights and possibilities; and who better than theatre historians to appreciate the heuristic value of a good story.[258]

This final thought: "heuristic value, provoking otherwise unconsidered insights and possibilities; and who better than theatre historians to appreciate the heuristic value of a good story" is of the utmost relevance to the argument of this chapter and this thesis. It reminds us that if speculation does not have the same weight as evidence then the third option they mention seems the most fruitful and all-inclusive approach: "acknowledging the ethical imperative of historians to make themselves visible in the narrative in order to counter the belief that they are writing what actually happened". Proposing that a definitive history is possible is a play in the politics of power (who has the authority to suggest what happened) and not conducive to open, multiple and mutable stories which Bromfield and Cavanagh argue is what makes up theatre history in particular since it is a constantly referenced and re-referenced area of study, as in any art. I would argue, this lends itself to all studies of histories. So how does one make oneself "visible"? All of the collectors have made themselves "visible" by nature of the act of collecting, as we have established; researchers must show the analysis of the objects as defined by their

[257] Ahmed, Sara (2006) p.22
[258] Bromfield and Cavanagh (2009) p.5-6

own unique perspective: why are you interested and why are you responding as you are? Exhibition is an ideal medium for this discursive exploration as objects speak at the same time as captions/labels and any publication after it.

In order to exercise this self-reflexivity, we may appeal to that which seems designed to gratify the individual. Baudrillard calls this “phantasy of a centre”, of “the ego”:

> These fetishised objects are therefore by no means mere accessions, nor are they merely cultural signs among others: they symbolise an inward transcendence, that phantasy of a centre – point in reality which nourishes all mythological consciousness, all individual consciousness – that phantasy whereby a projected detail comes to stand for the ego, and the rest of the world is then organised around it.[259]

I am interested in Baudrillard's talk of "mythological consciousness". It reminds us of Cardinal's idea that "selfhood is sewn into the fabric" of our relationship and experience with objects producing a kind of mythology that cannot be avoided and is no different to the ancient art and tradition of storytelling that is often aligned with performance practices. A familiar form of collecting around this “phantasy of a centre”, for example, is the current social sentiment for digital technologies: Smart Phones, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, Tumblr, Flickr all part of the instant and invisible archive, 'The Cloud', a metaphor for the intangibility of internet storage. This endemic willingness to archive amongst computer literate people serves to connect and invent some intimacy where physical and spiritual space has occurred and registers a fear of loss. The impulse to share has never been stronger, but neither has the “phantasy of a centre”, of collecting virtual material to narrate one's identity based on personal interest. This gives a new perspective on the blurry issues of private and public in the archive one that may allow us to interrogate in a similar way what is being constructed in terms of identity in the collecting of objects for posterity. More importantly, the selfhood in the forming of narratives through visual culture is still very much part of our Western and global performance in the everyday, particularly among the younger millennial generation through technology. To appeal to this ontology in the treatment of archival research is pertinent as Museums and archives are not dissimilar in their

[259] Baudrillard, Jean (1994) p.45

constructive approach today. Perry calls this modern construction of identity a “visual language”, a term that could help us enhance the attention to, use of and output from collections by appealing to the researcher’s artistic side: "As a voracious consumer of imagery, I am constantly on the look out for artefacts that somehow reflect but also enhance my visual language."[260]

Hedstrom and King in “On the LAM: Library, Archive, and Museum Collections in the Creation and Maintenance of Knowledge Communities” say that choice is a construction which prioritises and discards to create self-interested narratives:

> Many museums, archives and libraries today are major centres of research, but they also play an important role in shaping social discourse regarding contemporary controversies. In museums, part of this influence occurs through the very act of selecting what will be displayed, and how those displays will be presented. Most museums have collections far larger than their space available for display, so what gets displayed can make a statement.[261]

This is a positive move for those disenfranchised or forgotten from general histories. The responsibility to “make a statement”, to 'shape social discourse', to comment on “contemporary controversies” are considered part of a democratic, healthy self-mirroring and identity sharing today (seen for instance, in online discussion of the Black Lives Matter campaign, Inter-Sectional Feminism and Trans-Rights). To think that one person's opinion matters, as collectors do, does not appear to be an unsound suggestion anymore, in particular with younger people. Where our duty lies with the document and record is acknowledging the resistance, non-documentation of performance, seeking out 'embedded documentation' of the self, to avoid archival silence, to avoid forgetting. In Eric Jones Evans’ collection he includes anecdotes and personalized descriptions of the objects he has collected which serve to add character, perhaps credence and individual perspective to his collection. Just as in Evans’ collection, the researcher’s anecdotes, personal ‘visibility’, ‘visual language’ may also add breadth to a perceived history, “make a statement”[262] for further contemplation by the reader.

[260] Perry, Grayson (2011) p.68
[261] Hedstrom and King (2004) p.24
[262] Ibid.

We have already touched upon how an awareness of the influences of certain signs and habits in the history of forming an archive collection can draw one closer to recognising one's own cultural linguistic systems of conception. Now we must ask: can focusing on the uniqueness of each singular body in proximity to objects as individual history writers encourage the broader *operative* potential of objects? Is the body to be considered this site of 'interference' of "rupture"[263] in the performance of archival historiography?

The Body in Engagement with Materials

> To pick up an artefact is to engage with the past on so direct and so immediate a level, it approaches something magical. The experiences of weight, surface texture, sound and smell are part of the physicality of objects […] we do well to remember that most of the human body is surface, including inner surface areas such as nasal passages, the digestive tracts and the inside of ear and mouth. This vast tactile area determines human experience of the external, material world […] Such is the power of touch that where an object is removed from access to the elementary senses, as is frequently the case with museum artefacts, the sense of seeing will be supplemented from memory with information of weight, shape and other experiences that handling the object would yield in an effort to complete the reduced experience.[264]

In her essay, "Object Biographies", Karin Dannehl reminds us that our interaction as a body with objects is not only personally sensorial but "magical". With this understanding of surface to surface contact our creative comprehension of stories from objects is infinite. Responding to these sensations and metaphysical contemplations of what the body can do to perceive and translate adheres to our 'responsibility' as researchers to conceive all possible readings opening up a richer and more analytical mode of study. The alternate side of this is the existential "delirium"[265], the fear of obtaining data and not obtaining data and knowing or not knowing what to do with it in archival research. The rather metaphysical concept of "history writing"[266] demands rationality of patience, method, pace and attention to detail to make scholarly work. In turn, it allows one to confront the reciprocity in the triangulation between collector, object and researcher, legitimately engaging one's living experiential

[263] Spiegel, Gabrielle M. (2007) p.5
[264] Dannehl, Karin (2009) p.130
[265] Steedman, Carolyn (2001) p.19
[266] Ibid p.29

association with artefacts based on the smell, touch, sight, sound and, indeed, if we go by Carolyn Steedman's discussion of 19th century French historian, Jules Michelet, in *Dust,* the taste, or ingestion of an object:

> It cannot be determined whether it is the manuscripts or the dead, or both who came to life, and take shape and form. But we can be clearer than Michelet could be, about exactly what it was that he breathed in: the dust of the workers who made the papers and parchments; the dust of the animals who provided the skins for their leather bindings. He inhaled the by-product of all the filthy trades that have, by circuitous routes, deposited their end-products in the archives. And we are forced to consider whether it was not life that he breathed into 'the souls who had suffered so long ago and who were smothered now in the past' but death, that he took into himself, with each lungful of dust.[267]

The body in Steedman's rendering of the archive literally ingests the history the objects are imbued with. The researcher invests themselves physically as well as intellectually in archival research imagining history from as many conceivable angles as possible. An appreciation of this allows the mind to drift to the real human conditions behind the objects that have been left there for us, where they came from, why, who obtained them, who made them originally, what were they used for, how were they stored, why, what condition are they in now, why? All these questions about the physical circumstance of resource materials are imperative to really imagining what they can say for us now and this is only afforded by the creative play with ideas from direct physical stimuli. Elizabeth Freeman calls this "haptic historiography" which she says produces "ways of negotiating with the past and producing historical knowledge through visceral sensations."[268]

When I first came across Eric Jones Evans' make-up box, I was struck by the dust and smell that wafted out of the case as I opened it, there were powders in the box that are now roughly 70 years old and the sense that one could taste the past was palpable. Beyond the immediate hit of perfumed powder was the smell of greasepaint (often aligned with the romance of being present in the theatrical dressing-room) and then the unfamiliar smell of the rabbits' feet that Jones Evans kept in the box as a powder-puff for

[267] Ibid p.27
[268] Freeman, Elizabeth (2010) p.123

applying theatrical make-up (and also associated with good luck in the theatre).

There is a feeling of revulsion that jars one between the present, one's "visceral sensations" and "negotiating the past"[269] as the olfactory imagination lingers on what the circumstances would have been like for Jones Evans. From the "haptic" handling of this collection object we not only perceive of Jones Evans' preparation for performances but also his ephemeral encounters during his performances as he used this make-up box on stage during his one-man impersonations of Dickensian characters.

Foregrounding this practical process that already occurs in the study of artefacts can invite researchers to be aware of their own corporeal presence amongst and with objects. The research methodology used here firmly and appropriately locates archival research within the paradigm of theatre and performance scholarly consciousness particularly in relation to the concept of performativity. In this case, 'performativity' has to do with both unconscious and conscious ritualisation that takes place in collection, research and engagement with objects to seek knowledge. Awareness of bodies *as* bodies in the archive is moving towards creating an accessible model for research that is transferable outside the academy, since it is inclusive of *all* bodies. As Grayson Perry posits in his reflection on working with collections, it is an act that brings one closer to understanding the ideas of others through time: "Seeing oneself, one's personal concerns as a human being, reflected back in the objects made long ago by fellow men and women with similar, equally human, concerns."[270] Mieke Bal discusses the body in the ritual and performance of collecting, archiving and research as an imperative part of the communication process that is mechanised in history writing and describes it here as indistinguishable from that of a spiritual approach to imaginative history; "extending the self, reaffirming the body": "Leisure, aesthetics, competition, risk, fantasy, a sense of community, prestige, domination, sensual gratification, sexual foreplay, desire to reframe objects, the pleasing rhythm of sameness and difference, ambition to achieve perfection, extending the self, reaffirming the body, producing gender-identity, achieving immortality."[271] These acts are all rituals of immersion with agendas to reach a spiritual sense of

[269] Ibid.
[270] Perry, Grayson (2011) p.11
[271] Bal, Mieke (1994) p.103

connection through participation. To be fully aware of all of these "rhythms of sameness and difference" in history writing, from collecting to dissemination seems the mode by which we will achieve a diversification of ideas in archival studies.

When I first encountered the Tree Family Archive, the sense of being overwhelmed by the towering boxes of correspondence was a physically locating act. To materially surround oneself with what seems to be an unfathomably large task not only helped me to comprehend how I might begin approaching this research but also gave me a sensorial impression of what Maud was trying to achieve, or may have felt she was achieving by keeping all of the letters and diaries. A sense of security, evidence of a life in clandestine objects, a sense of wholeness or completion? Personally, the feeling was claustrophobia which physically serves to impress upon me that this collection had a psychological, personal and emotional and not just family motive. This invites the location of self-identity through the conscious appreciation of the individual body with objects. As long as my historical research was not informed entirely by my own bodily and emotional response to the collection but inspired by it and this is made 'visible' in the research findings this can be a very valuable experience in the performative encounter with objects in relation to the collector. Crossing historiography over the intellectual threshold of the personal into archival process can feel intimidating, prompting us to ask: after all, what does my view matter?

Perhaps recognition of the presence and significance of researching bodies in the archive may make Foucault's idea of "space for bodies beyond the text in the archive": beyond the politics of economic and social strategies of power, more poignant. He uncompromisingly relates paper-based archiving to a deathly stasis in *Power and Knowledge:* "A febrile indolence- a typical affliction of those enamoured of libraries, documents, reference works, dusty tomes, texts that are never read, books that are no sooner printed than they are consigned to the shelves of libraries where they thereafter lie dormant to be taken up only some centuries later"[272]. The engagement with the body in research to Foucault is theoretically

[272] Foucault, Michel (2002) p.79

conducive to rigorous study. The question is how far can we go with the bodily engagement/interaction with objects, before we fall irreversibly in to Derrida's "death drive"[273] for destruction?

At the New York University SIBMAS and TLA conference, 2014, Marvin Taylor, the Director of the Fales Library and Special Collection at New York University discussed the contention of *wearing* items in historical research through the collections. Taylor is particularly interested in the culture of the history of the leather jacket in popular and queer performance. He questions: if one wishes to understand the performance history of Marlon Brando should one be able to wear his iconic leather jacket from the film *The Wild One*? Smell the leather, feel the weight, observe the fraying, the costume pinching and touching up of the seams to fit the screen shot objective. Wear and tear are givens over time either way. After all, things do die. Is this the beginning of research through wear? Of course, this is a conservation issue and brings back the larger questions of what is considered important and what is forgotten. Taylor also raises questions about the danger of fetishizing one historical object over another. In his testament that all stuff and all things are equally fleeting, relative to time and material, Taylor feels they are therefore equally important to really *use* in archival research.

In his tour of the Fales Library, Taylor expressed his concern as to why so very many researchers came to see the ancient papyrus in the study of literary history and no one came to see the extensive collection of punk zines from the 1980s. Both were created as an ephemeral performance, both speak of a time of art, culture and heritage and leave a trace for us to behold and comprehend. Taylor is not only arguing for the exploration of items considered "low culture"[274] to be investigated but to be investigated to their materially conducive fullest. A controversial but necessary discussion if we are to generate new thinking on humanist histories. However, the thought of allowing one moment in time to take precedent over another by allowing researchers to wear archival materials and not another one in the past or the future is counter-productive to the ethics of conservation which is to ensure the moderate condition of materials over time to allow as many people to contemplate it as possible for as long as possible.

[273] Derrida, Jacques (1995) p.7
[274] Halberstam, Judith (2011) p.6

Moreover, we may argue existentially that the product of the phenomenology of object-body relation or, what Elizabeth Wood and Kiersten F. Latham call "Person-object transition", is authenticity: “This conviction of the relationship between knowing the world through tangible, touchable objects is at the heart of phenomenological knowing and being-in-the-world” [275]. What do we lose if we ignore this potential for acquisition of knowledge and subsequent sharing and how do we access it if not through touch?

Re-instigating the 'play' of object based research into historiography closely associates its practices with performance theory in its social and individual experimentation with the body within environments, and with objects and other bodies. Pearce suggests that this is our “continuous emotional relationship of projection and internalisation which we have with objects”[276] how in both performance and history we project and internalise our treatment of objects through play. Pearce refers to psychoanalysis to specify the inevitability of this physical/emotional relationship in deciphering and re-coding objects:

> [Winnicott] designates an 'intermediate area of experience' in which a child begins to tell the difference between body parts and non-body parts and in so doing creates 'transitional' phenomena and objects: so, for example, a soft toy which can be sucked and cuddled up to can take the place of a breast, although the child knows that it is not one. What is important about this experience is the capacity to play with illusion, to use imagination working on an external object to create something for which a need is felt.[277]

Although a psychoanalytical perspective may seem derivative today, the point here is that physical experiment and awareness with objects leads to comprehension and categorisation based on personal needs, desires and identity and so offers a unique narrative framing. With “our capacity to play with illusion” in mind we are predisposed to implement our awareness of body to object function as a productive site of resonance. The proposition is that our corporeal comprehension of objects is more natural than to limit to text based intellectual interpretation. To contemplate Pearce's “transitional phenomena”; our ability to allow materials to stand in for other emotions, experiences, referents and thus contexts in time and space: history, is key to how we begin to share individual re-enactments of

[275] Wood and Latham (2011) p.55
[276] Pearce, Susan (1994) p.47
[277] Ibid p.46

what we find interesting or important.

CHAPTER THREE:

CURATORIAL THINKING WITH UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL THEATRE COLLECTION

> One way to explain our fascination with the contents of the archive is to examine the value conferred on the unique document by what Walter Benjamin, in his seminal essay 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', refers to as the 'aura' of the object. Academia thrives on the lure of new material and undiscovered textual territory. One way to ensure that research achieves the required level of originality is through analysis of previously unexamined material. The unique 'aura' of the archival document is thus bestowed upon its analysis by virtue of the perceived originality of the analyst's object of study.[278]

Introduction

Here the thesis will foreground the effect of exploring the possibilities of a focus on the instances of encounter in archival research between the researcher and the objects collected by a series of different collectors. I engaged in meticulous study of the Desperate Men Theatre Company Collection, the Eric Jones Evans Collection, the Arnold Ridley Collection, the Women's Theatre Collection and the Tree Family Archive all held at the University of Bristol Theatre Collection which is situated in the Theatre and Performance Department building in the centre of Bristol. This involved finding examples of different kinds of collection, beholding each as distinct arrangements by particular people and groups and investigating the various collecting drives, styles and narratives that created them and that a close study of them can impart. I had worked with the Desperate Men Company and their Archive before[279], the others however, were completely new to me. After I consulted with the Director, Jo Elsworth about which collections would be of interest in relation to how the contexts of the collectors can be considered to have had various effects upon what has been collected, the findings were that different collections had unique lives. Whether imposed by the collectors in the act of collecting, the executors on bequest or defined by the archive keepers and cataloguers themselves, there was a stark uniqueness in the differing practices of all of them. Our reading of them was that one was a business collection, one personal, one academic, one artificial and one a family collection and they have been chosen for this study in order to demonstrate just what effect the difference in agenda, motive, drive and style of collecting can make on one's reading of the material for historical research in the archive. After

[278] Freshwater, Helen (2003) p.7
[279] See preface

identifying, noting and secondary researching the materials within, I observed the accession records[280] and learnt a little more about the collectors. This chapter aims to identify who the collectors are, why and how they collected and what their chosen ephemera can say to us now.

By choosing a selection of items from each collection and discussing them here, I will be practicing the mirroring of the collector process that was introduced in chapter one, looking at how collections communicate who has "enlisted" [281] the objects, what is enlisted, where, when and how. This demonstrates more political social and cultural contexts of the collectors and their collecting process looking at the access and agency that they had to and with materials to impart their ideas. I briefly identify the object as it "arrives" to me[282], i.e. how I respond to it and why, employ the basic information, dates, names, places and allow the reproduced image of the item to both speak for itself as if in exhibition and then go onto to impart what I believe the "talkativeness of the things"[283] to be. I identify what I think is "interesting"[284] for both the reader, for historical research and for me and why. This methodology is designed to question what a critical consciousness of the subjective imaginative vision in history writing can say to us about the performativity of the collector, the 'object' (in this case the archival/collection item) and the researcher. The archive as an idea and as a space invites physical proximity, intellectual reflection and creative dissemination. The idea to is to posit, if I were curating an exhibition from these collections here are the items I would choose. This curatorial thinking, aims to help me in documenting the performativity of my research that is in some way dictated by the way the objects perform with, to and near me[285] and as the audience, what they say to me based on my experience of the world. In the case of these following studies that I have performed it is a process of "enlisting"[286] items from the collections to help to tell the story that they have spoken to me in these encounters. This chapter allows me to cast a curatorial eye over the data and discuss what stories have emerged and how.

[280] It should be noted that this is a privilege is not available for all collections at all times due to the particular requests of the executors of each collection.
[281] Daston, Lorraine (2008) p.15
[282] Ahmed, Sara (2006) p.4
[283] Daston, Lorraine (2008) p.11
[284] Veyne, Paul (1984) p.8
[285] Ahmed, Sara (2006) p.39
[286] Daston, Lorraine (2008) p.15

It then goes a step further to complete the triangular connect and conversation between the collector-object – researcher which this thesis is concerned with grounding a performative historiography in by "exhibiting" select items that made this possible for me. What I hope emerges is an open, creative piece of history writing developed by each case study collection that will demonstrate the possibilities of imaginative vision.

It is with Helen Freshwater's proposal in mind that I locate myself and my relationship to each collection throughout my explorations: "As the archive cannot offer direct access to the past, any reading of its contents will necessarily be a reinterpretation. It is for this reason that the archival researcher must foreground his or her own role in the process of the production of the past; responsibility to the dead requires a recognition that the reanimation of ghostly traces- in the process of writing the history of the dead-is a potentially violent act."[287]

As I reinterpret do I re-enact or re-appropriate? In order to experiment with questions of the validity of the performative practices of collecting, research and history writing am I committing "archival violence"[288]? When discussing a chilling display at the Khmer Rouge exhibition of rows of photographs of executed protestors Emma Willis speculates that this can be necessary and perhaps even the point of archival historiography: "The archive is not simply its objects, just as an image is not simply a copy of reality. Performative responses to and renderings of the archive demonstrate that it not so much a repository of historical truth as it is a set of materials from which new sensible aesthetic and social systems might be drawn."[289] The archive does not contain the complete past or the historical truth or a copy of reality, it is the composite product of "violent" work: discrimination, selection, exclusion, discard by individuals. It is imaginative and creative and defined by what is not there and so must the histories we glean from them be. "The archive will have been formed by many instances of radical contingency"[290] and these "radical contingencies" were met often in my research and are disseminated

[287] Freshwater, Helen (2003) p.14
[288] Derrida, Jacques (1995) p.7
[289] Willis, Emma (2013) p.124
[290] Freshwater, Helen (2003) p.15

in the stories that reached me and I will now forward in exhibition format. The future of archival collection items and their stories in the hands of both historian and archivist, who according to Heike Roms have a crossover relationship in research and development for archives: "I do not mean to underestimate that such archival work in the context of a 'proper archive follows an expert set of procedures that define it as a profession. But for the sake of my particular interest here, I want to propose that such procedures belong more generally to a set of (what I like to term) 'archival practices of care' that can be (and are) performed not just by archivists, but by scholars, artists, indeed by anybody whose labour contributes to creating and caring for a collection of documents."[291] I agree that these "archival practices of care" are the responsibility of all involved in exploring the resources that the archive holds and has to offer. This chapter aims to demonstrate that this "care" can and should be "performed" in curatorial practices and attentions equally.

[291] Roms, Heike (2013) p.38

ONE: THE BUSINESS COLLECTION

DESPERATE MEN COLLECTION

The Desperate Men Collection is an example of a Business Collection. As outlined in the preface, it is a notable variant in my study as I had already worked with this collection prior to conducting the research for this thesis. My involvement marks this case study as an example of how researchers (particularly if they are also cataloguers and curators of a collection) can consciously or unconsciously affect the forming of the narrative of what is left behind for theatre history. It is also one of two examples amongst these five case studies that has living collectors, which undeniably informs one's approach to, and thus comprehension of, the stories that can be derived from such a collection. These are both issues I will evaluate in this case study.

Who, Where, What, When, How?

Desperate Men are an Independent Street Theatre Company based in Bristol. They currently consist of four key managers/members/performers, Richie Smith, Jon Beedell, Richard Headon and Shirley Pegna. The company has been established for over 35 years and began as a duo consisting of Richie Smith and Jon Beedell who set out to make socialist theatre and performance art as professional clowns, street performers, absurdist poets and musicians. The company took their name because they self-identified as ‘desperate men’, economically, artistically, sexually, politically and philosophically their work is stylistically ‘desperate’ in their use of erratic and highly energised physical movement, music and imagery. The subject matter of their work sets out to refer to ‘desperate’ subjects and situations in the everyday world including environmental impacts on community, family and economy, governmental corruption and taxing of natural resources, homelessness, unemployment and starvation. They wrote and performed their works predominantly in Amsterdam and Britain. Interviews with company members made it clear for me that they desire their collection to be in keeping with the ethos of the company. That is to say they wanted to maintain the echo of the liveness of their work and so felt it apt to keep it as an open, working collection that is inclusive in its appeal, aimed at all ages and poiltcally subversive. Whether this is achieved is the responsibility of the company but also all that

encounter it and their employment of Rom's "practices of care".

Things That Talk

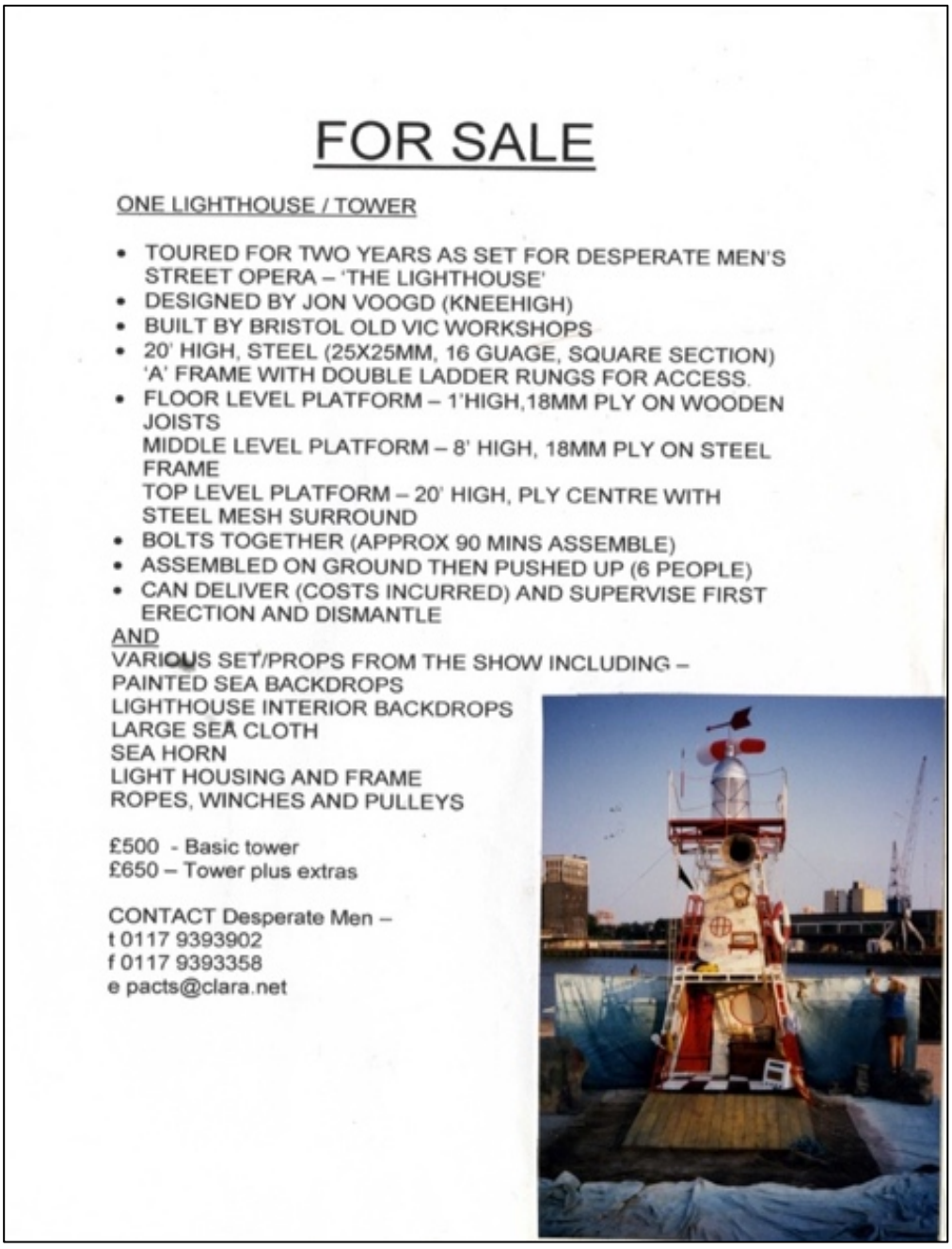

Fig 6. The Lighthouse: A Comic Street Opera, Advert for sale of Set, 1999.

An advertisement from the Desperate Men for an entire set structure that was used for touring outdoor performance, 'The Lighthouse'. The company used recycled and scrap materials to build this collapsible set which they drove around the country in a van, 1996-7.

The is an advertisement that has been created in-house by the company attempting to sell-off a piece of their bespoke set and staging. It intimates several distinct idiosyncrasies about the Desperate Men as a business that can both amuse and enlighten to the various exertions of the independent performance company. Under what circumstances would one want to purchase this "Lighthouse" set piece and staging? Perhaps to be reused as it is in a larger production that seeks a Lighthouse as part of their set, perhaps for parts, perhaps for curiosity or posterity. Whatever the market, the Desperate Men were selling it whole. It suggests that they needed to get rid of it with some haste, perhaps for the money, most likely because of the scale of it and the impossibility of long term storage. It would be time consuming and labour intensive to scrap it for parts and the Desperate Men were a busy company. As listed in the advert, it was designed by Kneehigh, built by Bristol Old Vic workshop and the company toured for two years putting up and taking down this structure from town to town. The members of the cast performed an energetic promenade piece of theatre using the entirety of the structure. They played up and down three platforms on rope ladders, all around and inside it, [as the video footage shows, it looked to be an endurance piece as much as it was comic promenade[292]]. In an interview with the Desperate Men company that I performed they indicated that it was not an easy feat. The photograph of the structure itself suggests a clear and sunny day but it was not so for every performance. It is a colourful, fairy-tale design with its extreme proportions like a caricature of a Lighthouse: a lasting example of their aesthetic style as a company. The item also suggests the community ethos that the Desperate Men have: it is locally produced with collaborative teams and sold back into that community (within which there is a long a lasting scarcity of funding for Fringe theatre in the UK) and would also have been in 1999, when they finished touring with this piece.

This collection item, prepared to be committed to archive is visible in this collection for a reason and to me it demonstrates how the Desperate Men work as a company and as a business: they move on, they perform a piece for a year or two and then deconstruct everything they use and start producing another performance. A prominent impression that is communicated with this item is the company's humour.

[292] Desperate Men Collection, The Lighthouse: A Comic Street Opera, Bristol amphitheatre 1999, VHS to MP4.

This advert itself has a tongue-in-cheek undertone, a self-aware performance that resonates the absurdity of what they do it and how they do as a company. “For Sale: One Lighthouse Tower” including sea horn. Like the sale of an auction set, the irony does not appear to be lost on the Desperate Men who recognize the desperation in everything they do. This is a collection item that, in isolated display, as I have the platform for now, talks of performances past, of bodies moving, sweating, toiling. It also reflects a discussion within the company of what is happening now and is going to happen after. The collectors kept this item and included it in their collection and the humour has migrated successfully with it to my personal encounter with it as part of my reading of the collection and the company as a whole as well as the agenda and motives for the collection as part of a private to public archive.

Fig 7. The Pilgrimage, Amersfoort Street Theatre Festival, 1994:

Photograph of the procession being led through Amersfoot for the performance of 'The Pilgrimage', a seven-day procession performance for the Amersfoot Street Theatre Festival, 1994. The company enlisted 20 volunteers to make and perform this piece.

This is a photograph that demonstrates a number of the more distinctive performance traits of the Desperate Men that speak of their imperative for artistic style, political approach and humour in their rather epic works. The company devised large scale processional events in the 1990s that seemed to

keep up their momentum by the employment of a very unselfconscious approach to clowning where the performers immerse themselves in excessively satirical characters and perform what they called "walkabout" for which they stay in character as they improvise conversations with the gathering public audience. The absurdity of the situation is framed succinctly in this photograph of Lucy Gorrell Barnes playing a pregnant monk, proudly holding a spray bottle of "holy water" with a dragged up nun and monk as part of her entourage leading and entertaining the crowd through the medieval streets of Amersfoort. The perceived innocence and wistful wanderings of the girl character floating alongside in representation of the 1444 Maria Miracle story of Amersfoort's legends. The legend they refer to is said to have brought pilgrims to the town raising the funds to build some of the most prominent and respected parts of the town, the church and walkway that made this procession possible for the company in 1994. The character of the 'Holy Relics' seller in the background has a vendor's tray around his neck selling bits of stick and rag tied together that he is trying to sell to the crowd, inferring that the myth opened the way for opportunists to pedal inauthentic wares. In the photograph, the audience are now resonant of those medieval pilgrims. Part of the Desperate Men's style is traditional social and cultural street satire, referencing Commedia Dell'Arte, Mummery and Mystery Plays. They use these approaches to gently mock their audiences, whether for comic value or to make it memorable with audience interaction creating 'walkabout' performances and general joking and banter. This item suggests that they have certainly had an impact, either way. The picture was taken by someone documenting the performance and in so doing has re-dreamt another still performance of its own, which I have now taken to perform for me in the context of this thesis. Hodgdon calls it a "hyperframe", "a master code for re-dreaming rehearsal as well as performance."[293] The production photographer to Hodgdon is as much part of the archive of performance as the subjects in the image are artists. The photograph here "braids production technologies with modes of performance": "These photographs can be thought of as images stored in memory, which is not an inventory but an *act* – call it a performance? – of memorizing, theatre resonating with archaeology."[294] An act of performing archaeology itself, the overall story of the Desperate Men theatre company that the photograph depicts is that they are rooted in something very

[293] Hodgdon, Barbara (2016) p.7
[294] Ibid.

traditional, folk art, street art, commedia dell-arte, political, cultural and economic satire: for the masses. To feature this element of global appeal seems important to the Desperate Men as a business, it was their way of continuing and spreading their work at the mercy of low funding. They often spoke a mixture 'Desperanto' (their own take on Esperanto), English and the native language of the locations on their tours and valued upholding a Grotowskian 'Poor Theatre'[295] that was inclusive and interactive, defiantly using and reshaping the space around them as it would shape them using play and humour.

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[295] Grotowski, Jerzy (1968)

Fig 8. Book of Jobs, a social club, 1983.

Production photograph of Jon and Richie.

What is most interesting to me in this photo is what is not quite so obvious as the semi-naked central subjects. It is the drinker in the background, the plastic plant hanging from the ceiling, the exit sign, the open door and the harsh lighting. It is a social club at the very beginning of Jon and Richie's venture in to performing as the Desperate Men. One is then drawn to the determination in the face and flesh of Richie (right), fully immersed in character despite the unforgiving surroundings, they are both literally and figuratively baring all, energetically and emotionally for this cause: this performance. The irony is that they are performing the "Book of Jobs" which happened to be about the 'dole' system in the UK at the time. The suggestion here is that they were dedicated and hard working as well as perhaps lacking

in funds, themes that are apparent throughout their collection, and remain as part of their ethos today. The members were in a constant battle with low funding as the Fringe arts have a tendency to be in this country. This photograph was taken in Amsterdam at the time a more aesthetically open location to fringe, punk and underground performance art circles (as we shall discuss a little further on). This item is here to document that world that they were trying to run a business in, the desperation is foregrounded in this photograph in the corporeality of their tensed, sinewy looking limbs. The two men, Jon Beedell and Richie Smith, were working in other teaching jobs and performing in various other troupes and bands at the time, the possibility of this having an impact on their health is also present in this image, presented looking a little dirty and underweight. Hodgdon's idea that the photograph re-dreams performance past and is an impression of a memory seems to apply here as it offers to "steal" a little fragment of the moment that it makes apparent has happened[296]. The technical effects of the photograph bring that knowledge of it as another performance to be encountered, to be reinterpreted as a separate document, performative in its own right. The physical and emotional exposure that their bodies were likely to have been subject to in this performance is played, again, in the over exposure of the light and its reflection off Jon's prone flesh. The item displays a brazenness with which the early Desperate Men went into their profession and their performance. The story imparted through their inclusion of this item in the collection is that it was not for nought, as their defiance crossed boundaries and got them into a situation where their work could be performed under their own terms, as a business today. In the same vain as I approach these items with a curatorial eye and they present themselves to me on my chosen path with them, this photograph is analogous of what this business collection can narrate: "The lines of rebellion and resistance that gather over time to create new impressions on the surface or on the skin of the social."[297]

[296] Hodgdon, Barbara (2016) p.14
[297] Ahmed, Sara (2006) p.18

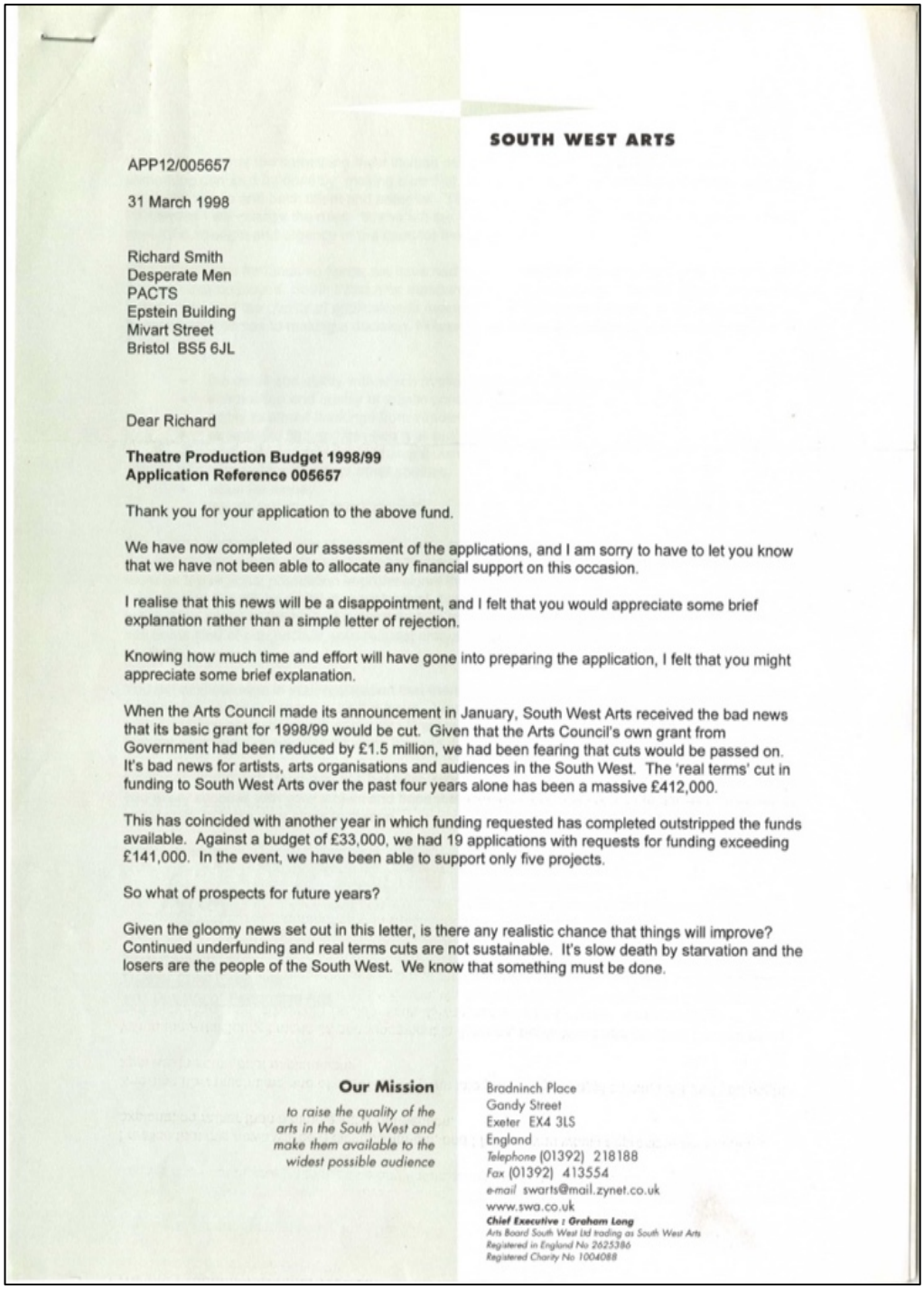
Fig 9. Festival of Fools Programme, June 14th-19th, 1978.

One of the company's collection of 'Festival of Fool's programmes, Amsterdam, where Jon and Richie say that they got their connections and inspiration from. The third week program, featuring Cunning Stunts, June 14th-19th, 1978.

Here I have chosen one item from the Company's extensive collection of original programmes from the Festival of Fools, an Amsterdam based festival for clowning, live performance, street theatre and absurdist and satirical music. The striking image on the front is of Jan Dungey of Cunning Stunts, a loomingly tall figure of absurdist clowning looking strong and defiant, as well as playful, in this image.

It is not only the 'larger than life' aesthetic that this item depicts for which I have chosen it to represent the stories of the collection, but for what the programme represents in terms of the Desperate Men's contemporaries, what communities that they were proud to be part of. A large proportion of the featured artists inside this programme are British, a demonstrative example of what the Desperate collectors themselves uphold which is that the work simply would not have been produced in UK in 1978, so they had to come to Holland. The Desperate Men were actually involved collaboratively with many of the line-up of British clowning performances, absurdist live art and bands including: Carousel, Footsbarn, Jango, Forkbeard Fantasy, Pigeon Drop and Cunning Stunts. This program is not only a continuation of the punk, underground and radical theme that the Desperate Men had as part of their social and aesthetic make-up, it is an item in a collection of programmes within this larger collection of theirs. This item has been kept and collated with hundreds of other programmes for similar festivals over the years, whether they performed at them or not. The company's desire to be surrounded by evidence or documentation of the world within which they lived, were inspired by and grew up in as a business and how they did it touring and collaborating with a network of contemporaries is prescient in this act of collecting. The regard and determination with which they collected may remind us of what Bal called the "collecting spirit"[298], it is in their character as a company. So this item amongst the other items suggest that they collect both generally and specifically, and, although the company members anecdotally say that their weakness is in marketing, this collecting spirit is extended in their collection of people: volunteers, artists, makers, designers and other like-minded performance companies. They rely on their inherent relationship with collecting to be the business that they are today.

[298] Bal, Mieke (1994) p.100



SOUTH WEST ARTS

APP12/005657

31 March 1998

Richard Smith
Desperate Men
PACTS
Epstein Building
Mivart Street
Bristol BS5 6JL

Dear Richard

Theatre Production Budget 1998/99
Application Reference 005657

Thank you for your application to the above fund.

We have now completed our assessment of the applications, and I am sorry to have to let you know that we have not been able to allocate any financial support on this occasion.

I realise that this news will be a disappointment, and I felt that you would appreciate some brief explanation rather than a simple letter of rejection.

Knowing how much time and effort will have gone into preparing the application, I felt that you might appreciate some brief explanation.

When the Arts Council made its announcement in January, South West Arts received the bad news that its basic grant for 1998/99 would be cut. Given that the Arts Council's own grant from Government had been reduced by £1.5 million, we had been fearing that cuts would be passed on. It's bad news for artists, arts organisations and audiences in the South West. The 'real terms' cut in funding to South West Arts over the past four years alone has been a massive £412,000.

This has coincided with another year in which funding requested has completed outstripped the funds available. Against a budget of £33,000, we had 19 applications with requests for funding exceeding £141,000. In the event, we have been able to support only five projects.

So what of prospects for future years?

Given the gloomy news set out in this letter, is there any realistic chance that things will improve? Continued underfunding and real terms cuts are not sustainable. It's slow death by starvation and the losers are the people of the South West. We know that something must be done.

Our Mission

to raise the quality of the arts in the South West and make them available to the widest possible audience

Bradninch Place
Gandy Street
Exeter EX4 3LS
England
Telephone (01392) 218188
Fax (01392) 413554
e-mail swarts@mail.zynet.co.uk
www.swa.co.uk
Chief Executive : Graham Long
Arts Board South West Ltd trading as South West Arts
Registered in England No 2625386
Registered Charity No 1004088

Fig 10. South West Arts, Theatre Production Budget, Correspondence, 1998.

Letter of rejection from South West Arts for funding grant due to general government funding cuts lowering their budget, 1998.

The final example I will give here is a letter of rejection. It was sent to the Desperate Men in 1998 and includes within it the prompting of a discussion of the general cuts to the arts and how it will affect the

region's funding for smaller companies. It is demonstrating how difficult it must have been to run a business in the arts at this time, for all involved in the industry. It states: "Given that the Arts Council's own grant from Government had been reduced by £1.5 million, we had been fearing that cuts would be passed on. It's bad news for artists, arts organisations and audiences in the South West." The Desperate Men collection is a business collection and these letters are common throughout; the Desperate Men were very particular about including these in the archive. There are folders full of them, they are existing examples of what the company say that they politically and creatively fight for: funding and access for fringe arts. There are corresponding news clippings within the collection that strengthen the resonance of disillusionment with the state of funding for the arts. In one such clipping, an article by John Freeman in *The Guardian*, October 2000, references Bristol in particular: "If a commercial television channel were foolish enough to programme "entertainment" such as *A Street Car Named Desire*, *Croak, Croak* and *King Lear* (the Bristol Old Vic, autumn and winter programme, 2000) it would go out of business in days."[299] This article, highlighted by the Desperate Men, suggests that the "mainstream" is for "retired English teachers, insomniacs and snobs". The journalist goes on to issue a rally cry for the sorts of companies he believes should be championed: "If the mainstream means popular, then let that popularity provide its own payment. What subsidy exists should be shared out between the innovative and the irregular. Between companies whose work flies in the face of mainstream approval. This is where support is needed. For the hard to see and the hard to sell. For the marginal, the subversive and the new. For theatre that, in its absence of compromise, is about the failure of theatre."[300] Before too long after this featured letter was sent, the South West Arts was absorbed into the Arts Council and the regions were once again compromised in terms of how they could spend their money on the arts. One of the more poignant elements of this item is that it starts out like a rejection letter, official and informative and finishes in a tone of defeatism and fear suggesting that the arts will have "a slow death by starvation". This is a candid letter and a rather alarming example of how widely and deeply the government funding cuts can be felt in the industry and culture.

[299] Desperate Men Collection, Press cutting, *The Guardian*, article called "I accuse…" by John Freeman, October 4th 2000.
[300] Ibid.

Conclusion: Uniqueness of Style and Motive and Impact on Relationship Between Collector-object-researcher

After a conversation with Jon Beedell, I found that his initial interest in and motive for the Desperate Men archive collection was to educate audiences and readerships on the general struggle for fringe art to obtain financial and other support as a serious art form. This moved me to investigate the factual indicators of this struggle that was at the heart of the company's desperation by name and nature. This included budget books, petty cash records, proposals and applications for funding and support, utility bills and rent expenditures for their Mivart Studios property. This was a good introduction to the circumstances under which the company were making work, indicating very tight budgets and hand written accounts, lengthy and multiple drafts of proposals and applications for funding and correspondence of decline and feedback were indicators of the difficulty that they have had in securing capital to continue making work. This was interesting artistically as the aesthetic of the collection and the general mood was an anarchic one, much of their posters, programs and photographs had a 'cut and paste' ('zine'-like), home-made and abstract or surreal design element and the material was arranged in the folders and scrapbooks in dialogue with press-cuttings on the state of fringe theatre that were contemporary to each work documented. There were letters, programs and posters that indicated the general change in design and focus of the company's work over the years and the inclusion of higher budgets and better marketing strategies as the company grew in popularity and notoriety. I then observed props and costumes in preparation for the exhibition and started to gather an understanding of the live events, the movements of the performers, the rehearsal, design and choreography of works, the booking, travelling, people involved and particular body, space and place circumstances for each piece and other logistics of moving and touring with street performance. The company's works took on an erratic theme, agenda, aesthetic and style and so their history and subsequent exhibition emerged with mixed and merged dates, defying chronology. Perhaps due to the collaborative nature of their work and its recycled, 'curiosity shop' design element their history defies neatly chronicled accounts. Their work seems to have been collected, remembered and performed in units measured by each performance work, perhaps because they rarely toured with more than one production at a time.

They have always worked with very small budgets and have a strict policy of recycling, borrowing, commissioning friends and talented amateurs as well as many volunteers. They often received funding from theatre venues, corporate businesses, educational institutions and festivals, organisations such as: South West Arts, Arts Council of England, Bristol City Council, Greater Bristol Foundation, Bristol and West Bank, British Council, Theatre Bristol and international funding bodies like The HKSAR Education Bureau, China and the Amersfoort and Oerol Festivals in Holland among many others. They also conducted residencies in warehouses, museums and studios for which they received various other arts bursaries once their work and ideas were more well-known on the fringe circuit and local theatre community. There are bills, accounts and finance papers that depict a large amount of their economic circumstances as a company over the years including acceptance letters for funding, grants and rent bills for rehearsal spaces. There are photos of their slightly more securely lucrative work with businesses, institutions and organisations for training, 'away days' and team-building events. They had an overtly anti-Tory musical caricature; what they called a 'walkabout' piece called the 'Tory Bastards', which met with much public controversy when they performed it in 1992. Their work also comments on global political issues concerning such things as the taxing of natural resources, the cult of religion and the shaping of culture through illegal practices.

Jon has also written widely on the poor state of funding and acceptance of their genre in British society, culture and politics. There is much documentation of this aspect of their work. Punk and anarchist magazines, items that align them with other socialist and anti-government acts and companies: Welfare State International (whose archive is also held by the University of Bristol Theatre Collection) and Belt and Braces. Richie, Jon and Shirley were also in a number of punk musical outfits and performances on the side. Both Richie and Jon were written into and performed in Viv Stanshall's production of *Stinkfoot* in 1985 at Bristol's Old Profanity Boat (now the Thekla) which sets them aside as part of the experimental, absurdist and radical set of performers at the time. The collection denotes how a theatre and performance company might respond artistically to the changes in political and socio-economic circumstances for living and working within the arts. The Desperate Men considered pop culture to be stale, generic and vacuous. To counter and change this they experimented with various mixed media,

using, for instance, live video and art in conjunction with folk arts like mummery, mystery, clowning, acrobatics, juggling and folk music endeavouring to revive aspects of these traditional arts in their work.

This ‘disparate and desperate’ element is key to any historical reflection on the Desperate Men’s work via the collection as it seems to defy the linearity of chronicle and chronology, fact and report. It is somewhat analogous of their work through and around time and space which uses endurance and movement. Any showcase of their work through exhibition would invite the material to be situated in such a way that generates dialogue between disparate or seemingly unrelated materials, performances, times and contexts as their work was very much based on this element and the collection reflects this. Contextual subplots and narratives of the theatre history of their work in context should be invited to be deduced through the presentation of the theme, style and story of their work. This may be done by focussing on the images of the performance events themselves, be this presented through production photographs, costumes and props, posters, videos or music, their work is colourful, literally and figuratively, using caricature and surreal imagery and this seems important to communicate. The subjective experiences of the performers/collectors must be comprehended and this is why the oral history is interesting. The uniqueness of the collection seen in the running theme of the distinctive design, fundamental dynamism and desire to affect change in their work should not be forgotten as it is the foothold for their business and as a business collection we must let it speak of this.

TWO: PERSONAL COLLECTION

ERIC JONES EVANS COLLECTION

This personal collection is one designed, executed, completed and bequeathed by one collector that holds objects of their own choosing. By nature of being one person's endeavour these collections often have an autobiographical, storytelling quality and thus it may be likely that researchers are more likely to approach these kinds of collections with that in mind or seeking it more than with others.

Who, Where, What, When, How?

Eric Jones Evans was an actor, playwright and medical doctor who worked in theatre between the 1920s and 1970s. He performed in popular London stage productions and provincial theatre and wrote adaptations of Charles Dickens' stories for the stage and radio. He was a close contemporary of Bransby Williams and John Martin Harvey, famous actors on the Fin de Siécle British stage, and an amateur researcher on the Actor-Managers of the Victorian popular Stage. The collection contains Evans' personal photographs of Bransby Williams and John Martin Harvey, letters to his contemporaries and friends that locate him within the field of theatre, and listings of Eric Jones Evans' work on stage and his personal writings and reviews of his life and work. Jones Evans added many personal annotations to his collection offering anecdotal details about dates and names and brief, contextualising stories of relationships and events.

Jones Evans began collecting around the time he was interested in theatre at school. He states that his love of popular theatre is particularly connected to his interest and work with theatrical posters of the 1910s-1940s which consisted of bold animated scenes from the productions being advertised that resemble melodrama and Tableau Vivant in style. He collected posters and catalogues of posters, postcards and programmes for productions and then later, in particular the 1950s, began to take his collection very seriously. He became a renowned collector and enthusiast for Actor-Manager memorabilia particularly props and costume of Henry Irving, paintings and other records of the Ellen Terry family and his friends, Bransby Williams and John Martin Harvey seen in his collection of photographs, postcards, programmes, playbills, letters and objects that belonged to them.

Things That Talk

Fig 10. ***The Heir At Law*** **Manuscript, c.1830s**

Hand-written manuscript of *The Heir At* Law which was originally owned by actor John Bannister (1760-1838) of Drury Lane Theatre and gifted to Eric Jones Evans from Bransby Williams. Eric Jones Evans has included a typed historical note from 1974.

This item represents Eric Jones Evans as an antiquarian, he liked to go to auction houses and bid on things that were of some market value, he was a collector of theatre memorabilia and he was a professional actor and stage writer. The typed notes in red ink that are placed with this item are Jones Evans' personal notes: the collection is punctuated with them. As alluded to in Chapter 2, Jones Evans placed many items on display in his home. Another of his personal annotations from the collection tells us exactly where his collected items were displayed in his house: "In the museum case in the drawing room" and "in the big glazed book case". Many items were donated to him by friends and family of the deceased and other enthusiasts. There are letters to arts dealers and theatre memorabilia collectors about various objects that show how interested he was in the collection and the market as well as memoirs that write in detail about his passions and the design and layout of the objects in his house which are included in the detailed papers of his accession records. This information offers an insight into the energy and passion that Eric Jones Evans had for his collecting and that he wanted us to be aware of this. There is also a portrait photograph of him with his many cabinets and picture frames that adorned his house in the background framed, a little like Freud with his "Greeks and Egyptians" mentioned earlier in Chapter 2. Jones Evans was also very proud of his friends and acquaintances in the theatre industry and this chosen item in particular was a gift from Bransby Williams. One of Jones Evans' idols and inspirations as well as a friend and keen collector himself, Williams was a theatre and music hall actor from Hackney who was a caricature player for comic parts and monologues. As a fan of Williams and a younger man, Jones Evans idolized his work and conducted his own amateur theatre acting in much the same style. Jones Evans took particular inspiration from his impersonations and larger than life interpretations of stock characters. As a thing, this item is interesting, it is a well preserved hand written copy of a character study of *Dr Pangloss*, in an adapted play called *The Heir at Law* based on Voltaire's *Candida*. As a time capsule it is suggestive of the kinds of plays that were being put on in the era of the original owner, John Bannister, the late eighteenth/early nineteenth centuries. Perhaps it presents a story about how he worked and what his performances were like, his corporeal practices with the item and the performance it represents present in its choice for collection here. My interest is in the

subsidiary history that has been implanted into this collection item. The anecdote of Eric Jones Evans which read: "This well-preserved part of "Dr Pangloss" in "The Heir at Law" was once the property of John Bannister (1760-1836) of Drury Lane Theatre. He was an excellent character-actor in high comedy parts. He came of a family of actors, but was originally bred as a painter, and employed himself in painting during his long period of retirement after he left the stage in 1815 […] The book was presented to me by my old friend, Bransby Williams. Eric Jones Evans 25/5/74." This is very suggestive of what was important and interesting to Evans, he has offered his own reading of the item and its context. His subjective suggestion that John Bannister "was an excellent character actor" tells us that he would like to think that he was, perhaps because Bransby Williams and himself were character actors and fanatics about the genre. The item was William's before Jones Evans' and who's before that? What this item tells me is that Jones Evans' collection was about himself and particularly *for* himself. It is his confident re-writing through this performance of collection that speaks the most volumes about what he wanted the chosen objects to say. Michael Shanks sees the antiquarian as somewhat pathetic in their fascination with the archival material as he writes that the aestheticisation of historical evidence is "a passion a little too intimate with the past, a fetishism. Fetishism: here is a desire to hold, look, touch; captivation by the consecrated object […] The wholeness of the past is lost in the melancholic holding of the object."[301] As an archaeologist by academic discipline, Shanks considers the archival fragment of an unrecoverable past and Jones Evans as a collector appears to see them as joyful reminders of what he deems a glorious past and a continuity that involves himself.

[301] Shanks, Michael (2001) p.10

Fig 11. Portrait photographs of Eric Jones Evans: (left) as a boy c.1906 and (right) as a young man in uniform, c.1917.

And the reverse of fig.7 with Eric Jones Evans' hand-written notation suggesting the left portrait was around 1906 with his first bicycle and the right portrait was of him in 1917 as Surgeon Probationer for the Royal Naval Volunteer Regiment in World War One.

This photograph and postcard were in an envelope of their own together. Jones Evans wanted them presented this way. He has also written the details on the back of each so that whoever picks them up will know when they refer to and what their subject is. It spoke to me first of the dual existence of Eric Jones Evans: his playful one, as a stage performer and his professional one, as a medical doctor. It represents his childish side and his serious side, literally and metaphorically. Within his collection, Jones Evans shares a memory in the transcript of a radio recording that he did that he started work in the theatre environment around this age of ten (his age in the left hand photograph in fig 7) during which he was travelling around towns in horse drawn cart helping to paste up play bills for stage productions and theatres onto boards. He states that the action and the colours depicted in the posters excited him towards the drama and theatre and he was never able to shake this feeling thereafter. Of course, as seen in the right hand photograph, the necessities of war-time changed his trajectory towards his profession as a medical doctor with the NHS and thus prescribed this duality in his life. Jones Evans offers a lot of these memories in his collection. The transcript of his oral history interview for example reads: "By God when he [Irving] played *The Bells*, it was wonderful, Oooh what a memory, and do you know I can remember every detail of that performance from the rise of the curtain right to the finale. And its still their in colour." He places a lot of credence on his sharp memory. He went on to wrote a history of Irving and of Bill Posters as well as an introduction to an exhibition on 'The Great Romantics'. He had an idealistic view and he wanted to share it candidly in this collection. The items displayed above have been hacked with scissors around the edges, Jones Evans has cropped them into his ideal view of himself and kept them together to reside in the archive as one item, one dictated story. Jones Evans' collection is self-archiving and autobiography through collection at its most literal. Jones Evans performs memory, reimagining his life and his passions for those who visit the material but mostly for himself, for his own leisure. There are layers of performance throughout this collection. Jones Evans performed for the camera, prepared the photographs to perform for the collection, I enlisted them to perform for my purpose here and they will provoke further re-dreaming[302] in the minds of the audience/reader beyond this. This highlights for me what Paul Clarke calls: "the fallibility of memory,

[302] Hodgdon, Barbara (2016) p.7

creative forgettings, and the relationship between remembering and imagination."[303] Memory is creative and the dissemination of it as storytelling is performative. These collection items are historical offerings, "shards"[304] that must be examined for their performative provenance in order to talk to us.

[303] Clarke, Paul (2013) p.369
[304] Bennett, Susan (2013) p.37

Fig 12. Production portraits of Eric Jones Evans in costume as Dickens characters (from left to right) Sam Weller from *The Pickwick Papers*, Bill Sykes from *Oliver Twist* and Mr Pickwick from *The Pickwick Papers*, 1949.

In light of this discussion of layers of performance I have chosen these three production portraits as they are examples of Eric Jones Evans' fandom, his fanaticism with canonical literature and his literal theatrical stage performance. As an example of a posed production photograph, the lighting is arranged, the back drop selected and the position held for these photographs, they are demonstrations of what Evans did on stage in performance, not instances captured in the ephemeral moment of a live stage performance, and yet they are of a performance. Framed and labelled, they look ready for exhibition and from the nail impressions on the corners it is clear that at some point they were mounted for display somewhere. In Evans' face you can see the lines that he has choreographed to create his impersonation: the squinted mirthful eyes of the sage cockney barman, Sam Weller, the down turned mouth and dark frown of the drunken brute, Bill Sykes, and his peering over the rim of his glasses of the curious and idealistic Mr Pickwick. Dickens' ideas of humanity as being satirically caricatured are theatrical in themselves and Evans re-enacts his idea of these ideas of characters in his embodiment of them. Jones Evans has then fragmented a particularly keen rendition and had it captured for display, advertisement

and posterity. I now emulate this process here by placing these three in a triptych above and photographing them. Daston calls this effect unheimlich when she refers to the origin of using the photograph as evidence in court at the end of the nineteenth century:

> Opponents contended that the photograph was a pale substitute for first hand evidence, the "hearsay of the sun," and therefore inadmissible; proponents also stressed that the photograph was a substitute, but this time for the mental images stored in memory on which witness testimony was based – zerohand evidence, as it were. Whether the thing at issue purportedly replaces people or nature, whether it is imagined as agent (the artwork) or patient (the photograph), there is something *unheimlich,* either demonic (the idol) or divine (the miracle), about its impostures.[305]

Hodgdon likens this to the palimpsesting effect of encounter and re-dissemination of archival ideas for history like ghosts: "If, as Marvin Carlson suggests, live performances are already embodied ghosts, hostage to prior material exigencies, performances and also performance memories, then the material remains surviving performance are ghosts ghosting ghosts – theatre as palimpsest, eternally borrowing, rewriting, re-animating a past performance."[306]

[305] Daston, Lorraine (2013) p.13-14
[306] Hodgdon, Barbara (2016) p.10

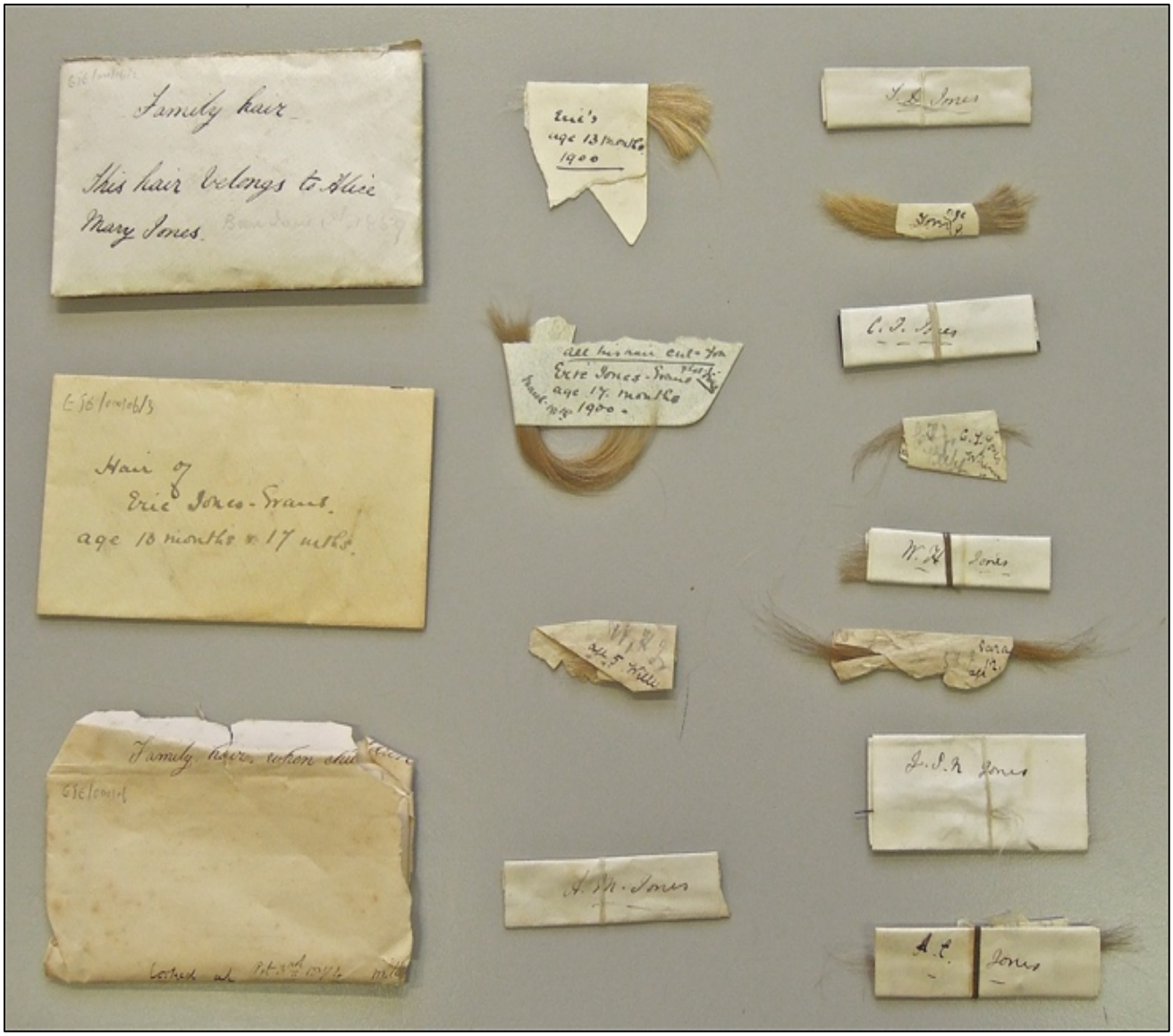


Fig 13. Hair samples from the Jones Evans family children dating back to 1874. Eric's own hair is dated at 1900.

The photograph here is of the eerie sight hair samples, looking here a lot like medical specimens in a forensic laboratory, these are all kept in an envelope and are part of a centuries old practice of collecting the slow degrading fragments of the body for emotional posterity, an autograph impression of the body's existence in time. The significance I think that this set of items has is that it is in a theatre collection, surrounded by completely unrelated ephemera. This is another rather prominent example of what sets Jones Evans' collection apart as a Personal Collection. It is another form of "ghosting"[307], an idea of

[307] Ibid.

something that once was, particularly romantic as these are locks from the hair of children and so no adult ever grew up to have this same appearance, like a hand or foot print, it is of a person that existed only temporarily and yet is labelled with the person's name for all history. The unheimlich is inherent in an archive collection by its very nature, being the severing of fragments and display of them in isolation as representative of moments through time. It is also a poignant reminder of Jones Evans' fascination with collecting, the man's life and work creeping into the thematic narrative of this personal collection on theatre. Here I performed a display with them in order to document them for posterity. I found all the items together and separated them out on the reading room table to encounter them, as Ahmed mentions to "attend to the flow of perception itself"[308]. This item, for they are filed and catalogued together as one, offered that *unheimlich* "aura"[309] to me as a researcher unfamiliar with the material. It speaks in and of itself, much like specimens in science and natural history museums do: "Some things speak irresistibly, and not only by interpretation, projection and puppetry. It is neither entirely arbitrary nor entirely entailed which objects will become eloquent when, and in what cause. The language of things derives from certain properties of the things themselves, which suit the cultural purposes for which they are enlisted."[310]

Conclusion: Uniqueness of Style and Motive and Impact on Relationship Between Collector-object-researcher

When I began my research of this collection I knew nothing about who Eric Jones Evans was or what his collection held making this case stand out next to my relationship with the Desperate Men collection. Since it is an example of an almost completely catalogued collection, I read through the catalogue first to get an overview of the types of material in the collection. Then the accession records to inform me of who Jones Evans was and what he had collected. There is little to no published information on him. His collection therefore is the only resource on his life, work and interests in theatre history. It also suggests that this is a history that may easily be overlooked despite Jones Evans being an invaluable

[308] Ahmed, Sara (2006) p.37
[309] Benjamin, Walter (1936) p.257
[310] Daston, Lorraine (2008) p.15

contributor of materials and funds to the University of Bristol Theatre Collection in general and a renowned theatre historian himself.

Evans did not have much documentation of his involvement in the theatre apart from his staged production photographs and his type-scripts of the adaptations that he had written. The impression is that his performance works were certainly unpublished and perhaps not produced. There are very few reviews or details of his productions. Questions about the reception and/or 'successes' of his stage work inevitably arise but what is important here is that these gaps serve to highlight his passion and idolisation that he has for his theatrical peers and friends in the industry. There was also very few objects that accounted for his work in the provincial theatres which gives even more the impression that the collection is a monument to the death of what he sees as the ideal in theatre around the late Victorian and Fin de Siécle. From a different angle the collection may be a document about his agenda and ambitions for the theatre or a mile stone to which Eric Jones Evans may have aspired as theatre writer and actor.

Photographs aided in putting faces to names and indicated the intimacy of relationships that had been outlined (i.e. were they personal or bought/mass produced images, were they signed or dated). I then looked at the material that told me only of Eric Jones Evans and his work so that I could locate him as a theatre practitioner among his peers that he so closely documented. His typescripts, published periodical journalism, press cuttings and production photographs gave a strong impression of where Eric Jones Evans fitted into the world that he was re-imagining for us in his decision to choose certain objects for his collection. The notorious Irving props that Jones Evans collected help one to behold the level of his fanaticism for the actor and its extent (i.e. what was there, how unusual was it, how monetarily valuable etc.). In contrast, Eric Jones Evans' make-up and costumes help one imagine the size, movement, aesthetic and presence of this collector’s live embodiment in his own performance.

It is worth noting that the accession records are only available to researchers by special permission from the Theatre Collection keepers so this information is not catalogued or ‘open’ as part of the collection.

I used it extensively to confirm the dates and terms under which the collection was submitted to and acquired by the archive. Being aware of what is ‘not there’ or not fully accessible is just as important as what ‘is there’ in order to comprehend how our readings as researchers are guided. From my access to accession records I obtained his birth and death dates and what material was legally bequeathed and committed to the archive, who his executors were and what work they had in forming the status of the collection that was finally moved to the archive. Jones Evans was collecting materials in order to write his own theatre history.

THREE: ACADEMIC COLLECTION

ARNOLD RIDLEY COLLECTION

The Academic collection is set-up to educate. It is given to a University archive in order to ensure it is accessed for learning and teaching purposes. There is usually funding involved for cataloguing, ensuring the collection's safe-keeping and conservation. It can be the work of one or a collective of collectors. In this case it was a personal collection that evolved into an academic collection.

Who, where, what, when, how?

Arnold Ridley was a playwright and actor writing his most popular and memorable plays for West End and provincial theatres between 1924-1955. He appeared as Private Godfrey from 1968-1977 in the BBC Television Sitcom, *Dad's Army,* written by Jimmy Perry and David Croft. He also famously played Doughy Hood in the BBC 4 radio soap series, *The Archers,* in the 1970s before his death in 1984. Arnold Ridley requested that his collection be donated to the Bristol Theatre Collection at his death as he was a student at Bristol University where he received his teachers training certificate around 1916 and was said to have been a member of the Dramatic Society. His son Nicholas Ridley took over the role of collecting up documents that Ridley had kept throughout his career as a means of communicating the reception, breadth and progression of his professional work in British theatre which was donated in its majority in 2003 (after Arnold Ridley's wife, Althea Parker, died in 2001) to the Bristol Theatre Collection although some boxes were added in 2004, 2008 and 2009.

Things That Talk

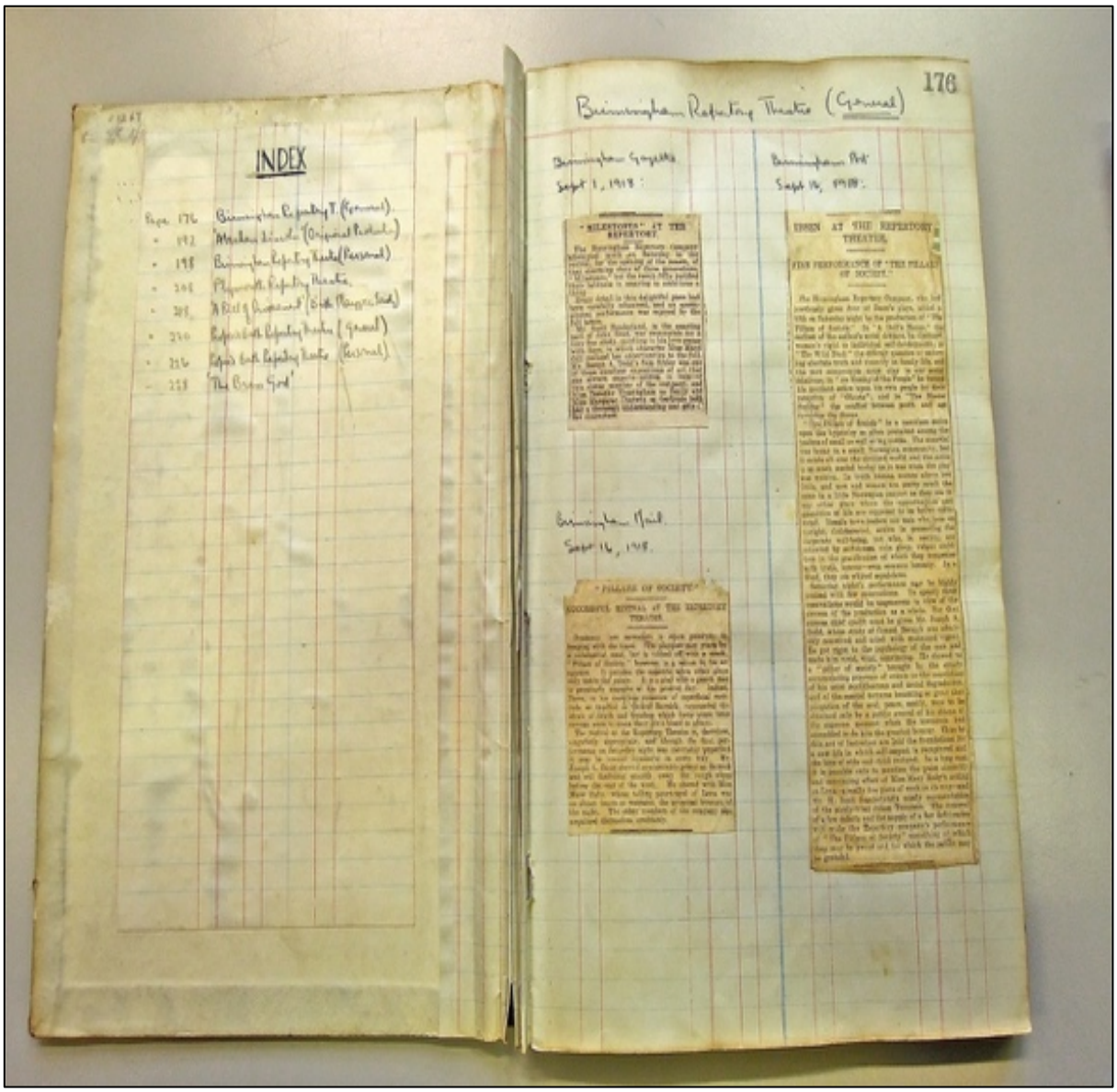


Fig. 14 Scrapbook of Press Cuttings on the Birmingham, Bath and Plymouth Repertory Theatres from 1918-1921.

The image of the opening page shows excerpts from the September 1918 editions of Birmingham Gazette, Birmingham Post and the Birmingham Mail.

These scrapbooks that Ridley produced himself are the most personal items in the collection. A prolific collector of press cuttings, Ridley began by very meticulously cutting and pasting every review of every Birmingham Repertory production that existed from 1918 into the 1930s. Ridley has listed, headed, dated, chronicled and catalogued throughout this scrapbook and there are several of them from over the years. This item is suggestive of Ridley's organized nature and what may have started off as a zeal for collecting. The item offers him up as a curator and archivist in his categorizing and managing skills.

The reviews are not memorable, they are reports more than critiques but they seem to document to Ridley a time, place and event and that seems the point. This is just before his career as a playwright will have taken off and just after his return from the first world war with severe wounds for which he was bed-ridden for a long period. This item is anomalous as one that tells us of his passion for collecting. He was an actor with the Birmingham, Bath and Plymouth Reps as a young man and these scrapbooks suggest an extreme pride in what they did, even if he was not mentioned in the cast. Given their age and material they are in excellent condition perhaps another testament to his interest in collecting is that everything in the collection is very well kept. It has been presented to the theatre collection with a large bequest of money to have it catalogued and it is a fully open collection to the public. The drive being apparent here to keep it preserved for educational use. The effect is of what Hodgdon calls "a tableau of what remains – objects and costumes- once actors have vacated the space and time of live performance that gestures directly toward the archive, searching through legacies left as endowments in public or boxed away in private archives." [311]

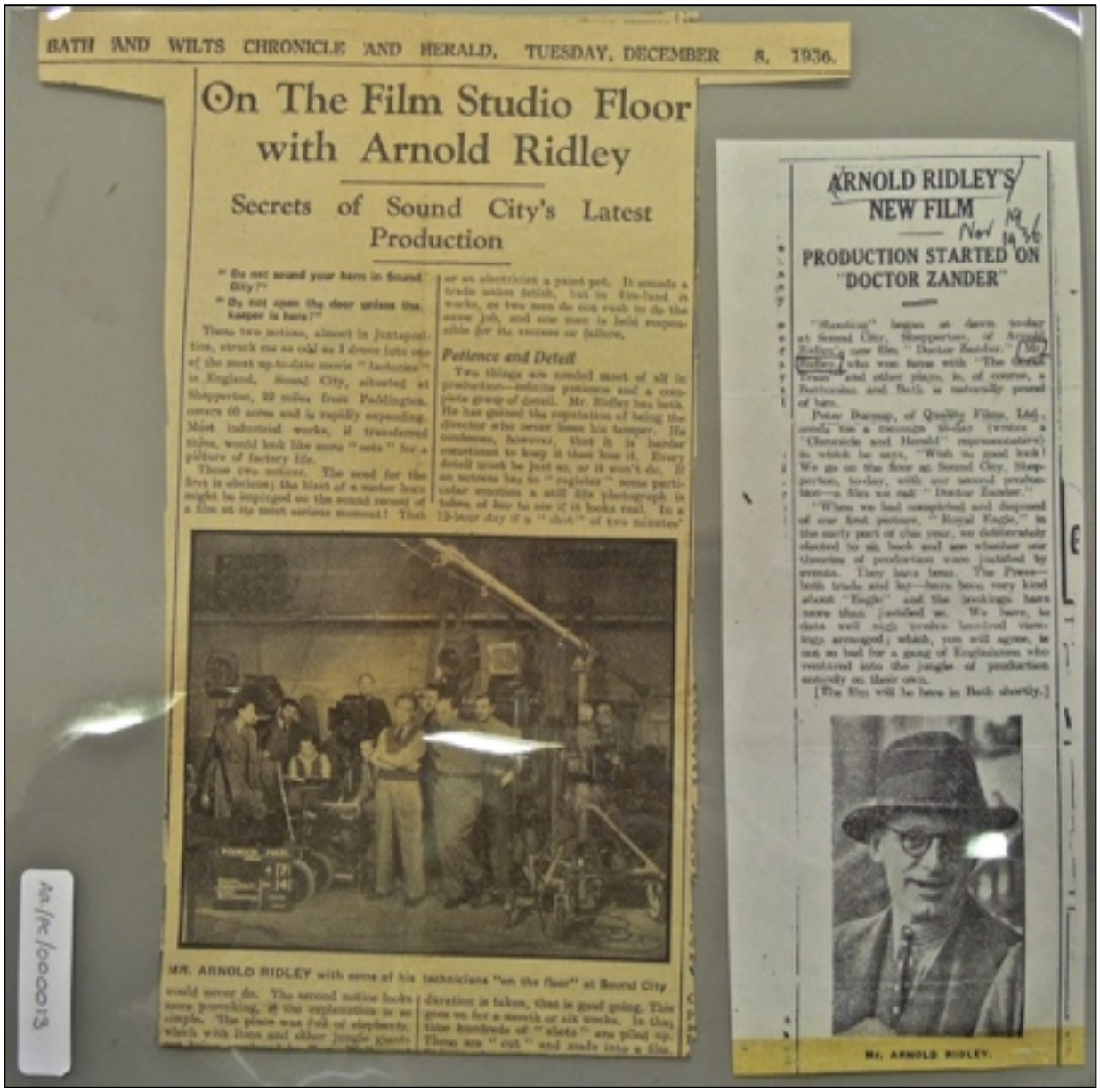
[311] Hodgdon, Barbara (2016) p.4

Fig.15 A pictorial programme for *The Ghost Train* at St Martin's Theatre, 1926.

This article shows the stage design, costume, make-up and stage direction for the production of the play in photographic images.

This pictorial programme is a very well-kept example of what the stage productions may have looked like for his most famous and long running play *The Ghost Train.* It was a comic crime and mystery play written in 1924 and was produced to great success in mainstream and provincial theatres across Britain, Europe, America and Australasia for approximately 60 years. The majority of the references that the items in this collection make are to this success and there were so many different productions, there was a huge amount of ephemera created to go with it. He also wrote many other lesser known (or lesser documented?) plays that ran in the West End, for example, *The Wreckers* (1924)*, Peril at End House* (1940)*, Tabitha* (1956) and *Glory Be* (1935) which are represented in the collection with manuscripts, prompt scripts, programmes, publications and news clippings but it is *The Ghost Train* that takes centre

stage in Ridley's collection. An indication perhaps that he was most proud of this a particular achievement but more likely that because it was running for 60 years, he accumulated the most material on it, suggesting the importance of unearthing the smaller productions as well. The item here is of particular interest however, because it contains photograph images of the production as it would have been performed at the beginning of its run in 1924. The costumes being contemporary to the era and the Tableaux Vivants style of scenography and production photography is demonstrated here. The production techniques and choreographed design of the performance all being visible, the make-up and the poses, the placement of staging and props all transparent and yet highly theatrical. The self-consciousness of melodrama displayed for the audiences in this pictorial with its glossy production and stylized border prints, this looks to be an expensive, high end object, perhaps significant of the successes of *The Ghost Train*. The production was indeed made into a silent film shortly after this was published, in 1926, suggesting that silent film industry may have been an influence on the original writing itself.



BATH AND WILTS CHRONICLE AND HERALD, TUESDAY, DECEMBER 8, 1936.

On The Film Studio Floor with Arnold Ridley

Secrets of Sound City's Latest Production

"Do not sound your horn in Sound City!"

"Do not open the door unless the keeper is here!"

Patience and Detail

MR. ARNOLD RIDLEY with some of his technicians "on the floor" at Sound City

ARNOLD RIDLEY'S NEW FILM

Nov 19 1936

PRODUCTION STARTED ON "DOCTOR ZANDER"

MR. ARNOLD RIDLEY.

Fig. 16. Press Cuttings from the *Bath and Wiltshire Chronicle and Herald*, (Left) Tuesday December 8th1936, picturing Arnold Ridley on the set of the Sound City Studios' film production of his play, *Doctor Zander*. (Right) November 19th 1936 report of the filming starting for the play by Bath's local, Arnold Ridley (pictured).

The Bath and Wiltshire publications both report Ridley's start on the production of the film *Doctor* Zander, demonstrating another part of his professional life as screen writer. He had already helped produce *Royal Eagle* with Sound City Studios in 1936 and was embarking on his next talking film in the same year. The Bath and Wiltshire Chronicle and Herald reports: "Two things are needed most in a production – infinite patience and a complete grasp of detail - Mr Ridley has both […] In a 12 hour day

if a “shot” of two minutes is taken, then that is a good thing”. They are flattering to Ridley in both of these articles and in the right hand press cutting they remind the reader: “Mr Ridley […] is, of course, a Bathonian and Bath is naturally proud of him”. He was known for being from the West Country and the local papers sang his praises regularly, and Ridley recorded them. The Ridleys seem to have wanted to share the successes of Arnold’s career with those locals, to show his varied talents and repertoire coming from Bath and reaching across the globe. The collection is concise and straight to the point, very streamlined in terms of what is included and has a clear academic agenda. Director of the Theatre Collection, Jo Elsworth is quoted in the Evening Standard article of Saturday November 17th, 2007 saying, “Arnold was a student at Bristol which is why he chose for the collection to be given to us to be used by students”. Whether it was artificially created for the sole purpose of education is debatable however given his more passionate start to collecting in 1918. The collection has clearly been lovingly put together by the both Ridley and his family and preserved over a long period of time.

Fig.17 Press Cuttings of Obituaries for Arnold Ridley, 1983.

The clippings picture Ridley as Private Godfrey in the television series, *Dad's Army*.

And finally, the documentation of yet another string to Ridley's bow in his long and eventful career in writing, plays, journalism, film making, radio and now television. The legacy that most researchers beholding this will be aware of. These, posthumous obituaries are, of course, indicative of the collecting work of his Son, Nicholas Ridley, who continues his father's press cutting addiction. These obituaries are just a few of many examples in the collection. They demonstrate the objective of Nicholas Ridley to commemorate his father as a film actor and television celebrity in one of the most well-known and long running BBC comedy serials, *Dad's Army*. The obituaries mention Ridley's real life as a veteran, as a sports master, a Bath man and his playwriting career but are notably short on the context of the long, busy and successful career in theater and radio that Arnold Ridley has documented in the

collection. Other posthumously collected items are common in the collection: obituaries from various papers, the readings at his funeral memorial service and a production programme for the *Ghost Train* that ran in 1993, demonstrate that the collection was a family endeavour. What I am perceiving from this collection of items is that one is emotionally drawn into a journey through a hectic, hard working and respectable career in theatre and performance only to find that his most astonishing achievements have been consigned to an unknown history and these obituaries are a sad reminder of that element. "The stable fixity of the place of the archive, with everything in its place for perpetuity, is called into question when we start to consider an archive's eventhood; its relationship with continually mobile historical narratives and values and its interrelationship with personal and cultural memory."[312]

Conclusion: Uniqueness of Style and Motive and Impact on Relationship Between Collector-object-researcher

This collection is certainly a reminder to the academic community working in practice as well as archival history writing that documentation and a continuous reference to this documentation is important for remembering the significance of nuances and changes in one's work. It has also become more important and normal to document the conversations that are being had about and between these different elements of ones work which can contribute a more democratic and diverse reflection of the work of the past.

The story we get from this collection is detailed and suggestive, superficially we know that Arnold Ridley served in the British army in the First World War, taught sport at secondary school level, wrote about sport for men's magazines, had a number of poems published, was a player in the Birmingham and Plymouth Repertory Theatre Companies and was a member of, and performer with, ENSA (Entertainments National Service Association) during the Second World War. Later, Ridley's face and voice became known for his work on television and radio. The documentation, for example, tells us what Arnold Ridley might have earned for his plays as the collection holds agreements for his West

[312] Clarke, Paul (2013) p.379

End production of *The Ghost Train* which quotes: "5% on first £1000, 7½% on next £500, 10% on all over £1500 of weekly gross takings (paid weekly)" and for the provinces and suburbs "4% of gross weekly takings (paid weekly)". *The Ghost Train* and subsequent works are indicators of a life's work in popular entertainment with varying successes. His very writing of *The Ghost Train* itself refers to historical context. Arnold Ridley is a cultural historian in his work and these personal and artistic interest comes through in the very documentation of the production of his plays. *Ghost Train* was produced for the first time in 1925 and makes reference within to the effects of the Wall Street Crash on transnational businesses. The 1920s saw a popularity for mystery and comedy plays that had characters of the middle to upper classes at the helm of the drama. Ridley's plays *The Ghost Train*, *Easy Money* and *Glory Be* were reactionary titles to the effects of the stock market crash of the 1920s including the subjects of loss of capital and earnings amongst the middle to upper classes within the dialogue, characterisation and plot. His plays suggest the potential affects on character that money issues had on these British socio-economic groups, like greed, competition, despair and panic as well as counterintuitive generosity, altruism and philanthropy. *The Ghost Train* in particular seems to have a political agenda: it is anti-Russian propaganda, scaremongering against the Bolshevik movements, fear of communism and very pro British and anti-American in its plot and characterisation. *The Wrecker*, *Glory Be* and *The Flying Fool* are about the travel boom and the World Wars showing that he was a clear British military veteran; conservative to the core and interested in small acts of heroism and the glory of bravery. His plays were of their time socio-politically as they communicated many unmistakably xenophobic, racist and misogynistic stereotype and bias making characters, designs and plots. He was not interested, however, in creating anything abstractly analogous, for Ridley realism was key as he we see here in the producers notes that he wrote for his publication of *Beggar My Neighbour A Comedy in Three Acts*: "Amateur actors should also bear in mind that domestic comedies concern real people and that while all dramatic art, be it acting, writing or producing, is in the nature of an exaggeration, caricature should be avoided at all costs." Ridley seems to have a very specific idea of what he wants to say and do with his work and this continues into the collection and our subsequent reading of it. Its educational and pedagogical basis is written into the foundation of the collection.

Ridley capitalised on the comedy and mystery genres as well as the conservatism of adventure and international relations. At the same time he had worked in Repertory theatre where there were repertoires based on historic English plays and some contemporaneously modern playwrights like Noel Coward, R.C Sheriff and George Bernard Shaw. The influence of this artistic context is clear in his plays and this eclecticism seems part of the narrative of this collection. Ridley seems to have understood that a combination of all of these popular genres was a lucrative endeavour for the provincial stages.

Although they did not seem afraid of a bad review as we see from this news clipping:

> Such, very briefly, is the plot which Mr. Ridley takes two and a half hours to expose to us. One can imagine what Ibsen would have made of it. It is only necessary to reflect on what any Ibsen play would be like if its lifeblood – characterisation – were taken from it, to understand how dreary Mr. Ridley's play is, in spite of a theme which in itself is obviously full of interest. Not one of his characters possess the breath of reality. Their every word is tainted with the artificiality that sparkles not but is dead, so that the interest which one has for their lack of humanity. Perhaps, therefore, one may be forgiven for tending towards half-past ten to wonder when the curtain was going to come down." (*The Isis*, December 1st 1926)

Reminding us that this balance may have been conscious since the agenda was for reference, information and study. The material in the collection seems to tell a story drawing a line from writing through to the sale and publication of works, through to the staging of works, through to the reception and then onto the further production of works beyond the initial reception. There is material to show how a person can work in and between multiple fragments of the British arts and media. This material also demonstrates how the economic, socio-artistic and political conditions can be affected during war time with regards to theatre which can help us to comprehend our understanding of theatre and war within the modern idiom. It is a study in Ridley's career from veteran, to player, to playwright, to actor. It is a whole formalised commemorative document in the playwright's work, effort and transition in the theatre/media world of the twentieth century. The collection communicates a very positive experience of the theatre world for Arnold Ridley and its reflections on adverse circumstances, struggles to get published, negative or biting criticism are scarce. The collection is a carefully mapped document including photos of some productions and set designs, press cuttings, scripts, legal agreements for rights of plays and screen writings and programmes outlining general success. It is difficult to take for granted

this unbridled success in times of hardship and limitation in the arts, media and theatre industry defined by War time, recession, political uprising, technological and industrial advancements, civil rights and international relations.

FOUR: ARTIFICIAL COLLECTION

WOMEN'S THEATRE COLLECTION

The Women's Theatre Collection is an 'Artificial' collection in the sense that the objects have been collated under a specifically constructed set of political, social and academic agendas. The Women's Theatre Collection was set up by a combination of academic and archival staff at the Bristol Theatre Collection who advertised their academic motive to find, document and collect ephemera that represented unpublished women's theatre. The donation and contribution of its contents were made by an expansive collective of collectors under an artificial thematic starting point of "Women's Theatre".

Who, Where, What, When, How?

The initial curators of the collection from 1990 onwards were: Linda Fitzsimmons, who was a professor in the Bristol Drama Department, Sarah Morris, who was Assistant Keeper of the Theatre Collection, Christopher Robinson, who was the Keeper of the Theatre Collection in 1996 and Jo Elsworth continued this role when she joined the Bristol Theatre Collection as Keeper in 2002.

The process began by posting advertisements in theatre and performance journals asking for donations to the collection. Many donations of play scripts and typescripts of women's theatre have been submitted from various playwrights and women's theatre contemporaries since. One could say in this respect that those who submitted copies of their work were also "collectors" as they contribute to the collecting 'collective'. Some of the higher profile collectors that contributed between 1990-1996 are Bryony Lavery (1991), Sarah Kane (1990), Tash Fairbanks (1991), Michelene Wandor (1992) and Julia Pascal (1996). Besides the playscripts, there are also the donations of the business collections of the Moving Target Theatre Company archive, submitted around 1990 and the Conference of Women Theatre Directors and Administrators (CWTDA) archive, whose work spanned from the late 1970s to the early 1990s.

Subsequently, due to their theme, plot and politics, five personal collections of women in theatre have

also been included in the broader collection, namely: Sylvia Rayman, Ella Burra, Marie Scharning and Margaret Macnamara. And as a sub or sister-collection, the Berta Freistadt archive is often grouped in with the Women's Theatre Collection (although it is rather more extensive and detailed in its own right). These were submitted by executors, family members and contemporaries of the deceased women (with the exception of Berta who started to commit sections of her collection to the theatre archive while she was alive).

About 80% of it of the Women's Theatre Collection has been fully catalogued (with the exception of certain materials from new acquisitions and personal collections). Various funding opportunities have been used to have material catalogued by interns as well as student volunteers. The Bristol Theatre Collection's archival attention to the collection is noteworthy as it reflects the perceived significance of the material within their agenda, politics and process. Linda Fitzsimmons wrote in the advertisements for the initiation of the collection:

> A Collection of materials relating to women and theatre in Britain is being established at the University of Bristol Theatre Collection. We are therefore seeking offers of play texts, theatre group archives, visual and written documentation of women's theatre work, and other relevant material from all periods.[313]

She later said, "our criterion is that they have been performed, although not necessarily published", the suggestion being that there was a wealth of these materials out there due to a general cultural ignorance around women in theatre in an overwhelmingly patriarchal industry. The collectors for this collection are playwrights, actresses and practitioners, producers, administrators, directors and researchers; their lives and work are varied, yet this political focus enters their work into an overarching discourse on women's unpublished theatre. Fitzsimmons designed this collection to be produced in conjunction with an MA in Feminist Theatre and the Bristol Theatre Collection's initiative to apply for Research Centre Status based on the breadth of materials in the Women's Theatre Collection library of reference books (which is a library of published academic texts based on the theme of women's theatre connected to the

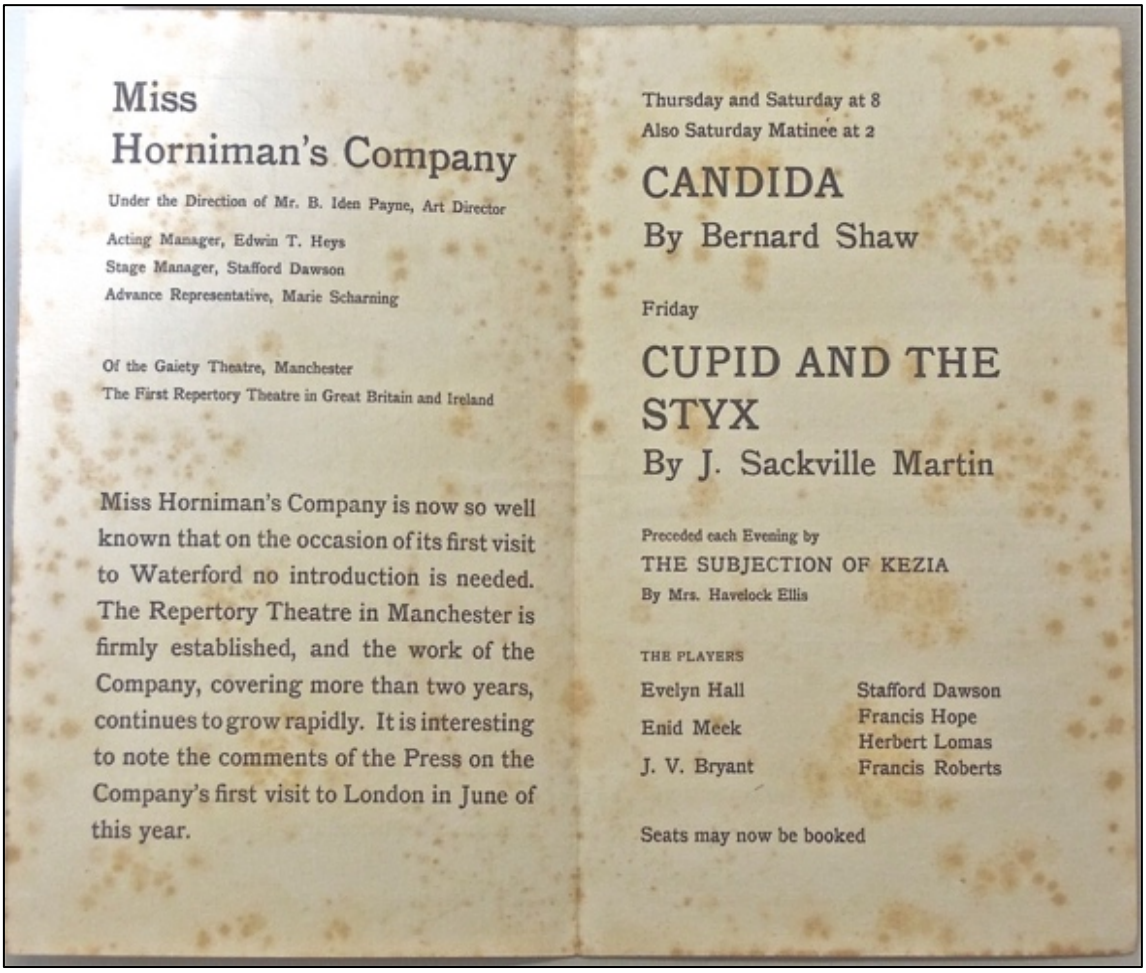
[313] Linda Fitzsimmons, Women's Theatre Collection, Accession Records , 'Stage and Television Today', 1992.

collection). The advert was published in the No.36 *Feminist Review* journal of 1990. This underlines the collection's unambiguously academic motive leading to a legitimate opportunity for a proposal for academic funding, which quotes:

> The collection now needs to consolidate and grow. The provision of a full-time research assistant would allow the collecting of material to be undertaken on a more systematic basis. The existence and whereabouts of likely material needs to be further researched and sought out […] There is much scholarly interest in this area of research, work will not be possible unless this material is collected, preserved and made available.[314]

There was a notable contribution from the now defunct 'The Feminist Archive' which was open from 1978 in Old Market, Bristol. This was a registered charity that was run by volunteers and funded by donation describing themselves thus: "The main aim of the archive is to collect and preserve material from the 1960s to the present day […] the archive began in 1978 when no other institution was collecting general feminist ephemera. From one woman's personal collection in an attic, it expanded and outgrew various locations, including a room at Bath University Library." This forms the nature of the collection agenda, to bring back in to living and working memory the work of women in theatre that might otherwise be undervalued and forgotten. As Clarke mentions in the discussion of the potential for future histories of performance, "evidence" of past performance must be almost radicalized to be of any dynamic further use: "Put to use and reuse – perhaps playfully and inappropriately in the hands of contemporary practitioners – they become available to reinvention, critically useful in new contexts or contemporary assemblages, offering inspiration and radical potential to disrupt the current state of affairs, to intervene in the present."[315] The agenda for the collection items is political appealing to gender studies, women's studies and feminist studies and so may benefit from this kind of intellectual approach to reiterates some of its more "disruptive" potential.

[314] Linda Fitzsimmons and Christopher Robinson, Women's Theatre Collection, Accession Records, No.36 *Feminist Review,* 1990.
[315] Clarke, Paul (2013) p.376



Miss
Horniman's Company

Under the Direction of Mr. B. Iden Payne, Art Director

Acting Manager, Edwin T. Heys
Stage Manager, Stafford Dawson
Advance Representative, Marie Scharning

Of the Gaiety Theatre, Manchester
The First Repertory Theatre in Great Britain and Ireland

Miss Horniman's Company is now so well known that on the occasion of its first visit to Waterford no introduction is needed. The Repertory Theatre in Manchester is firmly established, and the work of the Company, covering more than two years, continues to grow rapidly. It is interesting to note the comments of the Press on the Company's first visit to London in June of this year.

Thursday and Saturday at 8
Also Saturday Matinee at 2

CANDIDA
By Bernard Shaw

Friday

CUPID AND THE STYX
By J. Sackville Martin

Preceded each Evening by
THE SUBJECTION OF KEZIA
By Mrs. Havelock Ellis

THE PLAYERS

Evelyn Hall
Enid Meek
J. V. Bryant
Stafford Dawson
Francis Hope
Herbert Lomas
Francis Roberts

Seats may now be booked

Fig 18. Programme for Miss Horniman's Company production of George Bernard Shaw's *Candida* and *Cupid in the Styx* by J. Sackville Martin, 1910.

Marie Scharning listed as 'Advanced Representative'.

This programme is from the Marie Scharning sub-collection. Scharning was an actress and there are many very telling documents in her collection about how a working actress may have struggled her way up to a state of professionalism including actors' boarding house booklets, wage agreements and reviews. Later on in her career after various temporary runs with travelling theatre companies, Scharning made connections with Miss Horniman's Repertory Company in Manchester's Gaiety Theatre and became 'Advance Representative', writing the descriptions of plays for programmes, at one point billed as Secretary and sometime performer. For context, Annie Horniman formed the first

Repertory in the country in 1904, founded on her family's tea inheritance. Collector, Scharning, was therefore one of the first contributors to what became a popular, professional and successful company. Scharning's work with Miss Horniman's Repertory company was based on (according to the introductory blurb on each programme) socialist principles in which men and women worked equally together on all sides of production, marketing and administration and all earned a wage conducive to their efforts. This was the first Repertory Theatre Company in the country, where a resident company performs a chosen repertoire of plays, using local and not touring companies and generating their own choice of stock plays, in itself a bold political statement for equality and the right to work and make a living. As well as this production evidence for George Bernard Shaw's *Candida* featuring Socialist views and the beginnings of the promotion of female choice and independence there is a programme in Scharning's collection for Annie Horniman's season at the Royal Court Theatre billing the contemporaneously controversial 1910 play by Stanley Houghton, *Hindle Wakes,* which is a story of class conflict and extra-marital sex. Annie Horniman was sole proprietor of Miss Horniman's Repertory Company, funded by family inheritance, she was an art scholar an occultist and political activist who had already helped contribute to the opening of the Abbey Theatre in Dublin. Scharning being involved on the first Repertory company in the country run by a woman and mixed gender team is highly significant to the impact of her historical narrative. Documents she collected show a conflict between the fading away of the traditional Victorian theatre values and Music Hall entertainment and the emergence of a social message in the way in which theatre was produced and circulated as well as its content and style. This is particularly present in her documentations of her own move from acting on stage in low paid chorus entertainment for music hall and variety to her involvement in the more socially reflexive Repertory.

Fig 19. (From left to right) Sylvia Grey, Miss Annie Halford, Ellen Terry as Beatrice in *Much Ado*

About Nothing.

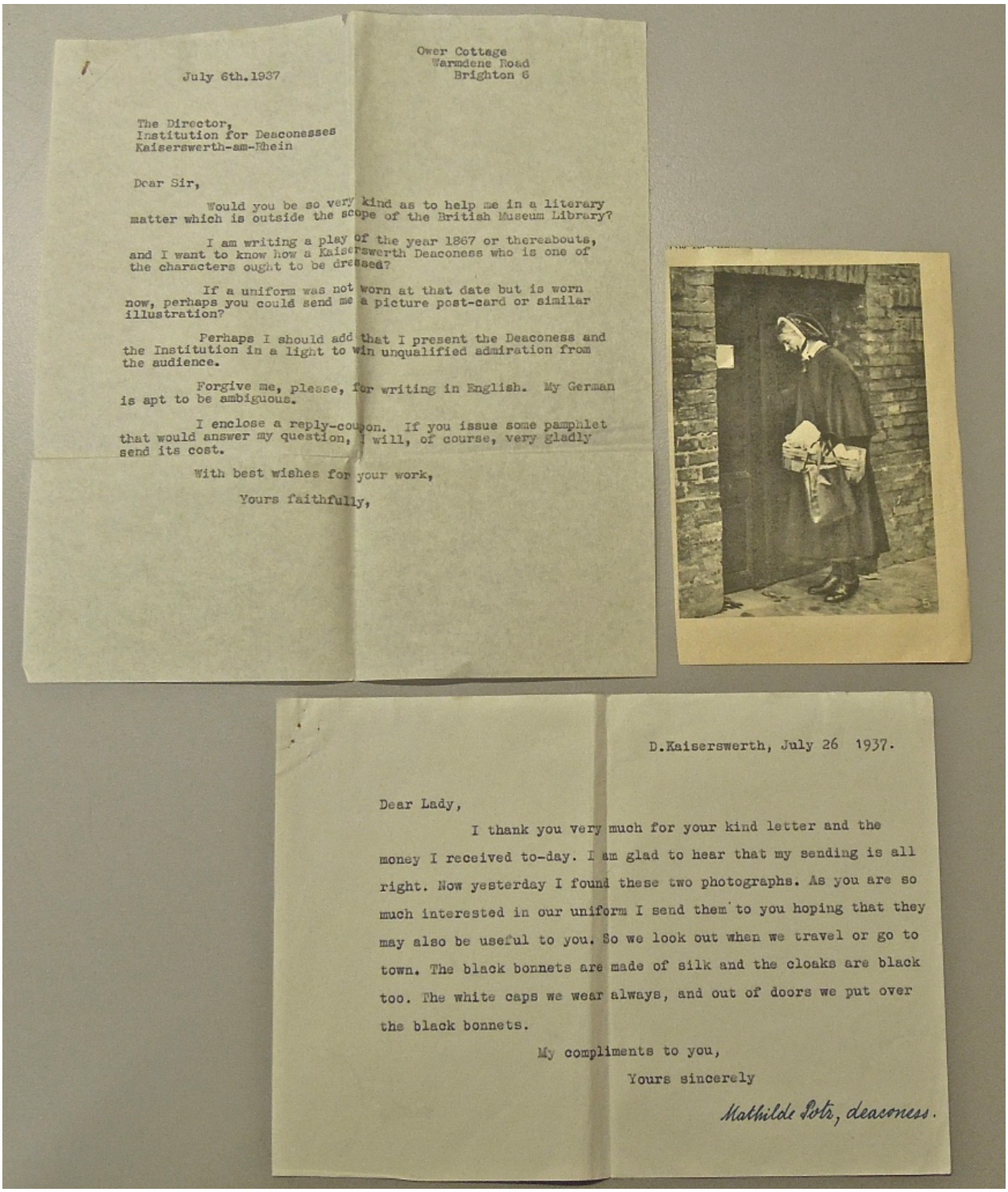
Fig 20. Miss Constance Gilchrist (top left), Miss Calhoun (top right), Madame Georgina Burns (bottom left), Lilian Langtry (bottom right).

This selection of calling card photograph prints are from Ella Burra's sub-collection. This is the smallest of the sub-collections in the Women's Theatre Collection with the most scant and mysterious array of items that say very little about the collector herself. These collected items have therefore come to represent her and what she may potentially have wanted to disseminate by keeping them. For brief context, from top left of the triptych of items: Annie Halford was a pantomime, music hall and comic opera performer often in the principal boy roles, Sylvia Grey was a dancer and actress at the Gaiety and Ellen Terry is famous for her starring roles in the major plays of the Actor-Manager theatre stages. In the second selection down, clockwise from the top: Constance Gilchrist was a famous child model and actress and later Baronet, I have struggled to find information on Miss Calhoun for the purpose of this thesis, Madame Georgina Burns was a popular singer on the music hall stages often in duet with her husband and Lilian Langtry was a well-known stage actress and theatre company owner.

Burra has many of these promotional photograph images, from the extremely famous Ellen Terry to the relatively unknown Miss Calhoun, it is the fact that they are actresses that interests Burra. They are strong independent working women, in itself a duel edged profession in that they are revered for their talents and yet it is unusual for the time for a woman to be working independently from those who held their dowries. The late 19th century was an increasingly empowering time for women in performance in Britain who could finally be recognised for their talents on the stage. The top three are particularly confident photographed in their roles posing in character. The bottom four are professional women, images of whom may have been circulated for casting calls.

Burra herself was a playwright around the beginning of the 20th century. Known for writing *Audacity Ltd.* (1923-6), a play that was produced and widely criticised and rejected after one production according to the letters and news clippings that constitute her collection. It occurs to me that she was

unlikely to have made much financial gain from this play due to the inclusion of so many rejection letters. Her collection is small and for the most part includes documentation of people and works to which her connection is not clear, therefore, it seems she submitted ephemera that appealed to her as a woman in theatre locating herself as a fan among stage professionals and a researcher herself. The accession records of the Women's Theatre Collection includes correspondence from Glynne Wickham to Burra regarding her professional advice on his contributions to the 'Theatre' section of the 1960-8 edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica.* Although it is not documented in her collection that she was herself a theatre practitioner it is clear that she had reputable academic knowledge of theatre history. Burra's expertise was leant to Wickham's 'Farce' and 'Tragi-Comedy' inserts in the Encyclopedia and since he was the founder of the University of Bristol Theatre Collection, their relationship may explain her interest in bequeathing her small gathering of material to this particular archive. Burra's connections with Glynne Wickham suggest a clear education and ability to write and offer expertise in certain theatre history subjects but her apparent lack of success as a pronounced playwright are communicative of a social obstruction to her art but not her academic status as a woman. She would have been in her 80s when she was contributing to Wickham's 1967 addition to the Encyclopedia. There are also rejection letters to other women which she must have collected from them with the intention of demonstrating struggle.



Ower Cottage
Warndene Road
Brighton 6

July 6th.1937

The Director,
Institution for Deaconesses
Kaiserswerth-am-Rhein

Dear Sir,

Would you be so very kind as to help me in a literary matter which is outside the scope of the British Museum Library?

I am writing a play of the year 1867 or thereabouts, and I want to know how a Kaiserswerth Deaconess who is one of the characters ought to be dressed?

If a uniform was not worn at that date but is worn now, perhaps you could send me a picture post-card or similar illustration?

Perhaps I should add that I present the Deaconess and the Institution in a light to win unqualified admiration from the audience.

Forgive me, please, for writing in English. My German is apt to be ambiguous.

I enclose a reply-coupon. If you issue some pamphlet that would answer my question, I will, of course, very gladly send its cost.

With best wishes for your work,

Yours faithfully,

D.Kaiserswerth, July 26 1937.

Dear Lady,

I thank you very much for your kind letter and the money I received to-day. I am glad to hear that my sending is all right. Now yesterday I found these two photographs. As you are so much interested in our uniform I send them to you hoping that they may also be useful to you. So we look out when we travel or go to town. The black bonnets are made of silk and the cloaks are black too. The white caps we wear always, and out of doors we put over the black bonnets.

My compliments to you,

Yours sincerely

Mathilde Pots, deaconess.

Fig 21. Copy of letter, dated 1937, from Macnamara to The Institute of Deaconesses, Kaiserswerth-am-Rhein, requesting information about how a deaconess from around 1867 should dress, a reply letter from Deaconess Mathilde Pots with a photograph print of a typical deaconesses uniform for travelling.

Relative to the vast amount that has been saved for this collection, this coupling of letters and

photographs is a tiny fraction example of Margaret Macnamara's intense research for her playwriting. One of the key stories that arise from her sub-collection is that she wrote a play on Florence Nightingale that she had been researching and working on for years but could not get produced before she died. Her collection holds all of her research notes for this project which vary from scribbled notes on napkins to folders of transcribed sections of books on Nightingale. Hodgdon reminds us that all of these scraps are potential storytelling fragments of a working process and offer documentation of practice, approach and style, "an object biography": "Scribbles on ever smaller pieces of paper, indecipherable notes written on coffee-stained post its; fragments, sounds and thoughts remembered when waking and as quickly forgotten. When gathered together, such scraps, scribbles, drawings and fragments might be called an object biography that reflects on performance processes, explores their historical density."[316] This particular item that I have chosen is telling of the lengths to which she would go (and to which one had to go before the dawn of the Internet). The transcription reads: "Would you be so very kind as to help me in a literary matter which is outside the scope of the British Museum Library? I am writing a play of the year 1867, or thereabouts, and want to know how a Kaiserswerth Deaconess who is one of the characters ought to be dressed?" The reply letter to Macnamara in German accented English from the Deaconess, says: "Now yesterday I found these two photographs. As you are so much interested in our uniform I send them to you hoping that they may also be useful to you. So we look out when we go to travel or go to town. The black bonnets are made of silk and the cloaks are black too…". What is most striking here is the attention to detail. Macnamara wants to find out what exactly a Kaiserswerth Deaconess would have been wearing in 1867 presumably because there is a scene where Nightingale visits the Lutheran community where she receives medical training and publishes her first book. It is the detail in the historical practices of the characters as being authentic, the fact that there is a character who represents a Deaconess, a scene in which Florence visits and in technical terms that Macnamara would have written this detail into her play. How would she have done this? In the stage directions? It is very particular thing to put costume suggestions in the stage directions unless you are directing it yourself. What is also noteworthy is that she kept a copy of her letter to the Deacon, the photographs

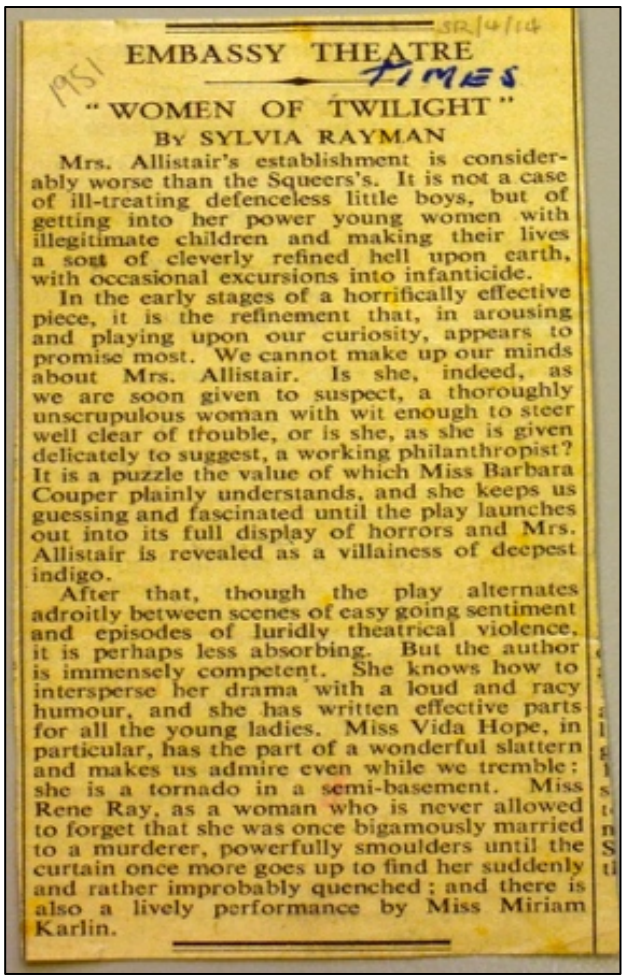
[316] Hodgdon, Barbara (2016) p.4

sent back and the detailed reply that the Deaconess was so kind to send. She kept these together in a file marked Florence Nightingale with many other papers on the subject, as intimately detailed as information about Florence Nightingale's pet owl and how she mourned its death.

When "Florence Nightingale" was finally finished, Sybil Thorndyke, in the height of her acting career, was set to star but the play was never taken up professionally and could not raise the funding or interest to be produced before Reginald Berkeley's *Lady With The Lamp* was released in 1929 with great success. Macnamara includes a letter of rejection from Lytton Strachey, author of the biography *Queen Victoria,* regarding her request for his help and advice on writing the Florence Nightingale play as well as one from actress, Flora Robson, refusing to play the title role who says: "I have fallen out of love for this kind of play because it is a biography and not a play". Macnamara has made sure to include the positive correspondence that she received about her manuscript that often have the shared opinion that her version is considerably better than Berkeley's, offering a sense of balance. For example, a letter dated August 18th 1929 from Geoffrey Dearmer begins:

> Dear Miss Macnamara, I can't refrain from writing you a little note of heartiest congratulations on your Florence Nightingale which I have just read for Maurice Browne. It is a real beauty, a specimen of chronicle drama as it should be, carefully selected, rich in facts, accurate, quiet, neatly contrived as regards situation and brilliantly alive. I read it aloud to my Father (a stickler for facts and historically learned) and my Step-mother, no mean critic. My Father said after the first few pages that Berkeley's was obviously an inferior work and every page lives out the truth of that statement.
> (For Maurice Browne Ltd., Haymarket)

The general impression is of a woman who had a keen eye for the market of theatre production but kept to her personal interests in play writing, not compromising. A keen keeper of ephemera, the inclusion of her research notes to identify the intense study she undertook was perhaps to memorialise her hard work, since, despite her setbacks, she was still researching the subject 20 years after its initial rejection showing extreme determination.



SR/4/14

1951

EMBASSY THEATRE

TIMES

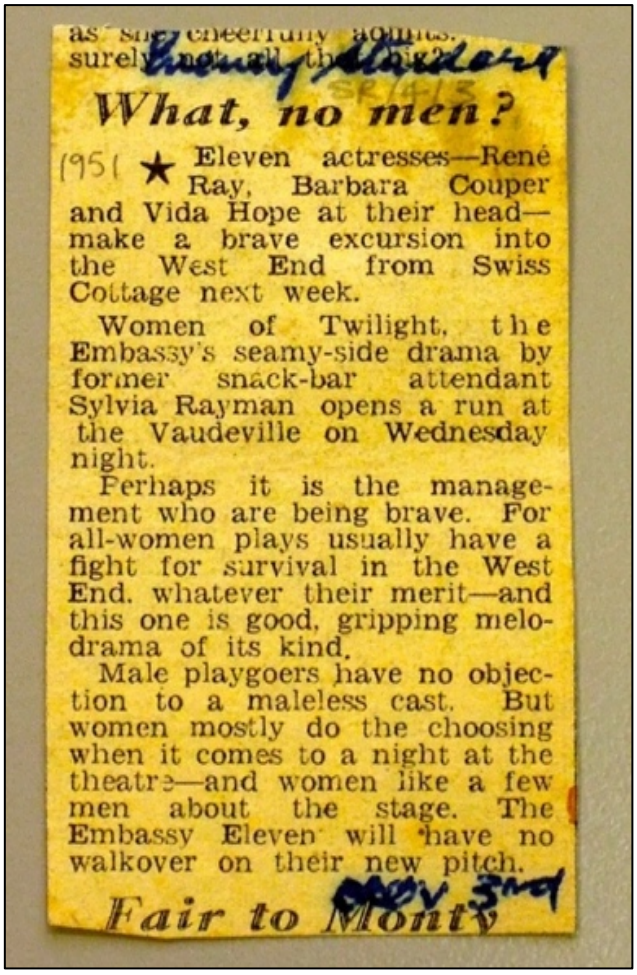
"WOMEN OF TWILIGHT"

BY SYLVIA RAYMAN

Mrs. Allistair's establishment is considerably worse than the Squeers's. It is not a case of ill-treating defenceless little boys, but of getting into her power young women with illegitimate children and making their lives a sort of cleverly refined hell upon earth, with occasional excursions into infanticide.

In the early stages of a horrifically effective piece, it is the refinement that, in arousing and playing upon our curiosity, appears to promise most. We cannot make up our minds about Mrs. Allistair. Is she, indeed, as we are soon given to suspect, a thoroughly unscrupulous woman with wit enough to steer well clear of trouble, or is she, as she is given delicately to suggest, a working philanthropist? It is a puzzle the value of which Miss Barbara Couper plainly understands, and she keeps us guessing and fascinated until the play launches out into its full display of horrors and Mrs. Allistair is revealed as a villainess of deepest indigo.

After that, though the play alternates adroitly between scenes of easy going sentiment and episodes of luridly theatrical violence, it is perhaps less absorbing. But the author is immensely competent. She knows how to intersperse her drama with a loud and racy humour, and she has written effective parts for all the young ladies. Miss Vida Hope, in particular, has the part of a wonderful slattern and makes us admire even while we tremble: she is a tornado in a semi-basement. Miss Rene Ray, as a woman who is never allowed to forget that she was once bigamously married to a murderer, powerfully smoulders until the curtain once more goes up to find her suddenly and rather improbably quenched; and there is also a lively performance by Miss Miriam Karlin.



as she cheerfully admits.
surely not all the

Evening Standard

SR/4/13

What, no men?

1951 ★ Eleven actresses—René Ray, Barbara Couper and Vida Hope at their head—make a brave excursion into the West End from Swiss Cottage next week.

Women of Twilight, the Embassy's seamy-side drama by former snack-bar attendant Sylvia Rayman opens a run at the Vaudeville on Wednesday night.

Perhaps it is the management who are being brave. For all-women plays usually have a fight for survival in the West End, whatever their merit—and this one is good, gripping melodrama of its kind.

Male playgoers have no objection to a maleless cast. But women mostly do the choosing when it comes to a night at the theatre—and women like a few men about the stage. The Embassy Eleven will have no walkover on their new pitch.

May 3rd

Fair to Monty

PICTUREGOER June 28 1952

SR/4/13

Hugh Samson's Studio Round-up visits a unit that's going—

Over To the Seamy Side

"Women Of Twilight" presents the slatternly, not the sweet.

Will it earn Britain an "X"?: Andrew Ray's hush-hush picture

AFTER *A Streetcar Named Desire* and the rest of the hotch-potch of rough, tough films to come from America, it was, I suppose, just a matter of time before a British studio picked itself an unsavoury screen subject to film.

At the compact Gate Studios near Elstree they are making *Women Of Twilight*, which, as a play, ran on the West End stage for almost a year. Success as it was, no critic marked it down for ladylike behaviour.

The theme is life in a home for unmarried mothers. Tendency in this particular story is towards the slatternly, not the sweet.

And unless the makers, Daniel Angel Productions, have completely overhauled and refurbished young Sylvia Rayman's original play, it's five bob to a farthing that the censor will hand the film an "X."

WITH the exception of Laurence Harvey, who makes a one-reel appearance, then gets hanged, the whole cast consists of women.

Heading the line-up are actresses (director Gordon Parry calls them all "troupers") Rene Ray, Freda Jackson, Vida Hope, Lois Maxwell, Joan Dowling, Dora Bryan, Dorothy Gordon and Mary Germaine.

of the sort. We slap each other on the backs and say 'How are you, old girl?' in the mornings. It's a wonderful atmosphere."

Then the girl who can always be relied on for the frank word gave me a wink, adding: "But the sight of a man on the set gives us a gleam in our eyes. It drives us up the wall."

SR/4/12

Nine Lives in the Twilight

THEATRE: Embassy. PLAY: Women of Twilight, by Sylvia Rayman.

NINE unmarried mothers find themselves together in a Hampstead boarding-house run by a charming woman whose father might have been Fagin; mother, Lady Macbeth; and who was probably reared on rattlesnake venom. Drop by drop, the horror of their plight is squeezed out of the situation in this play.

Could Miss Rayman go on turning the screw of tension through three acts? She could. This 28-year-old waitress in a snack bar near the theatre, has filled the vacancy for a playwright who can turn chunks of contemporary life into thrilling theatre.

A first-class cast is led by Vida Hope and Miriam Karlin.

MAIL T. F. T.

Fig 22. Clockwise from above: *The Times*, review of *Women of Twilight* at the Embassy Theatre, 1951. *Evening Standard* review of *Women of Twilight*, 1951. *Picturegoer*, June 1952, review of film production of *Women of Twilight* by Sylvia Rayman. *The Mail* review of *Women of Twilight*, 1951.

These four press cuttings are from Sylvia Rayman's collection. They document the stage and film productions of *Women of Twilight*, a play that Rayman wrote in 1950 that had an all women cast and was about the plight of women in prostitution. Set in a 'half-way house' for pregnant prostitutes this was an unusually gritty and sensational production for 1951 with violence and an aggressive female Madam character so it inevitably attracted what appears from her collection to be large amount of varied and extreme attention. Clockwise from the top, we see that there is praise from *The Times* who enjoyed Rayman's comic writing "she knows how to intersperse her drama with a loud and racy humour" and felt that the characters were well written. Not the highest praise but a sound overview and plenty of encouragement for the performers. The main cast are played by Rene Ray, Barbara Couper, Vida Hope and Miriam Karlin. The next cutting over "What No Men?" from *The Evening Standard,* proposes that it will be a brave excursion for the women from playing at the Embassy in Swiss Cottage to the Vaudeville in the West End. An overtly misogynistic review, it suggests that the setting of unwed mothers to be sordid and disreputable "on the seamy-side". Rayman herself is "a former snack-bar attendant" before she is a writer. Is the review being honest or cutting when it says that "all women plays usually have a fight for survival in the West End"? They suggest it is because "women usually do the choosing when it comes to a night at the theatre – and women like a few men about the stage." The review is writing off the performance before it has even performed in a new theatre and the fact that it is "good melodrama of its kind" is buried in negative allusions to gender gaps. On the bottom row, from the left, we see that the "Seamy-Side" reference has been used for the film version as well. It is subtitled as "hush-hush picture", "slatternly, not sweet" tag lines that are pre-occupied with whether the film will get an 'x' rating. Rayman's writing is seen as "an unsavoury screen subject" and they make a wager that "unless the filmmakers […] have completely overhauled and refurbished young Sylvia Rayman's original play, it's five bob to a farthing that the censor will hand the film an 'X'." Not only a very patronizing address of Rayman as a writer but sensationalizing of her work for the wrong reasons, this article is offensive on many levels, not to mention the reference to women as "girls" and "troupers". The final item form *The Mail* is perhaps the fairest and giving the highest praise of the drama for a

miniscule column, although Rayman is still the "28-year-old waitress in a snack bar near the theatre", not a playwright.

One receives mixed signals from this cluster of items together. On the one hand, Rayman was a successful playwright in an almost exclusively male industry with a controversial play in 1951: she had a year's run at the Embassy with a highly accomplished cast, a temporary run in the West End and her play was made into a film. She moved from Manchester to London and rose immediately to success with her first play which she wrote after her 7 hour menial job, writing between the hours of 11pm and 3am every day. On the other hand, the way in which it was received was for the very worst reasons. It gained attention because it was an all-woman cast, perhaps titillating the audiences, the characters were prostitutes and unwed mothers, their sexuality was under scrutiny, the characters were forced into stereotypical female narratives of wither the devious slut, the villainous witch or the innocent virgin. Historically, Rayman may be located amongst the influx of playwrights producing slice of life drama with plots about the working classes in suburban lives with domestic, kitchen sink drama and crime and mystery scenes: "the angry young men". Yet, she was a woman making an independent living off her work, writing for Repertory festivals and local provincial and suburban theatres and groups, an anomaly at the time. She predated even Shelagh Delaney's *Taste of Honey* (1958), often bracketed as an "angry young woman" who received enormous press attention for her work. Rayman's play was translated in to French and German and broadcast on television. The story here seems to be that after hard graft Rayman produced a successful play but was perhaps ahead of her time? Much like the other items in this vast artificial collection, a story of not being rewarded accordingly for one's efforts.

Conclusion: Uniqueness of Style and Motive and Impact on Relationship Between Collector-object-researcher

This collection is not simply an artificially constructed academic project, it has grown and developed with the collation of items to become more dynamic and vital than simply a politicised artistic document. The reflections are biographical and personal and they speak of lives and struggles, fanaticism, hard work and research, practitioning, performing, struggling, successes and failures and

most prominently and broadly across the fragments of lives and works: perseverance. The performance and theatre industry was/is not hospitable to the work of women and a dedication to ones cause is necessary not only to be produced or published but seen, experienced or remembered at all and this collection of items demonstrates how easy it is to fade out of archival memory. From Rayman's juggling with misogynistic audiences, Scharning's contribution to the break through of women in stage management, Macanamara's intense attention to detail and Burra's academic incidental collecting approach. Danbolt offers an apt suggestion that may remind us what can be done by regularly unearthing this more marginal histories from the archive collection: "the present is inhabited by ghosts from the archives who resist our attempts to keep time in place and to close cases of unfinished histories."[317]

[317] Danbolt, Mathias (2013) p.462

FIVE: FAMILY COLLECTION

TREE FAMILY ARCHIVE

This Family Collection is one designed to gather collected ephemera relating to an entire family into one place. It is open for additions for further generations of the family to contribute to. The objects are from personal collections that reflect the life and work of the family. In this instance, it is most likely motivated by the perceived significance of the family's story as a lineage of theatre and performance celebrities beginning with Herbert Beerbohm Tree.

Who, Where, What, When, How?

Maud Beerbohm Tree (previously Helen Maud Holt) was married to Theatre Royal, Haymarket and later Her Majesty's Theatre Actor-Manager, Herbert Beerbohm Tree in 1883. She was an actress in Tree's theatres and his business partner off stage. They had three daughters, Viola, Felicity and Iris. Maud is the predominant collector for this collection as the bulk is made up of her own diaries, letters and notebooks and this forms the basis of the vast collection. The collecting and the submission of the collection was continued by various family members after Maud had died in 1937. It is a personal and family collection which stems from the general collecting work done by the family to form a story of the theatrical business of Herbert Beerbohm Tree – it is the sister collection to the Herbert Beerbohm Tree collection. However, it is difficult not to find oneself focusing on Maud's diaries which are very illuminating on how she ran family affairs and public relations to do with what became the Tree dynasty.

Things That Talk

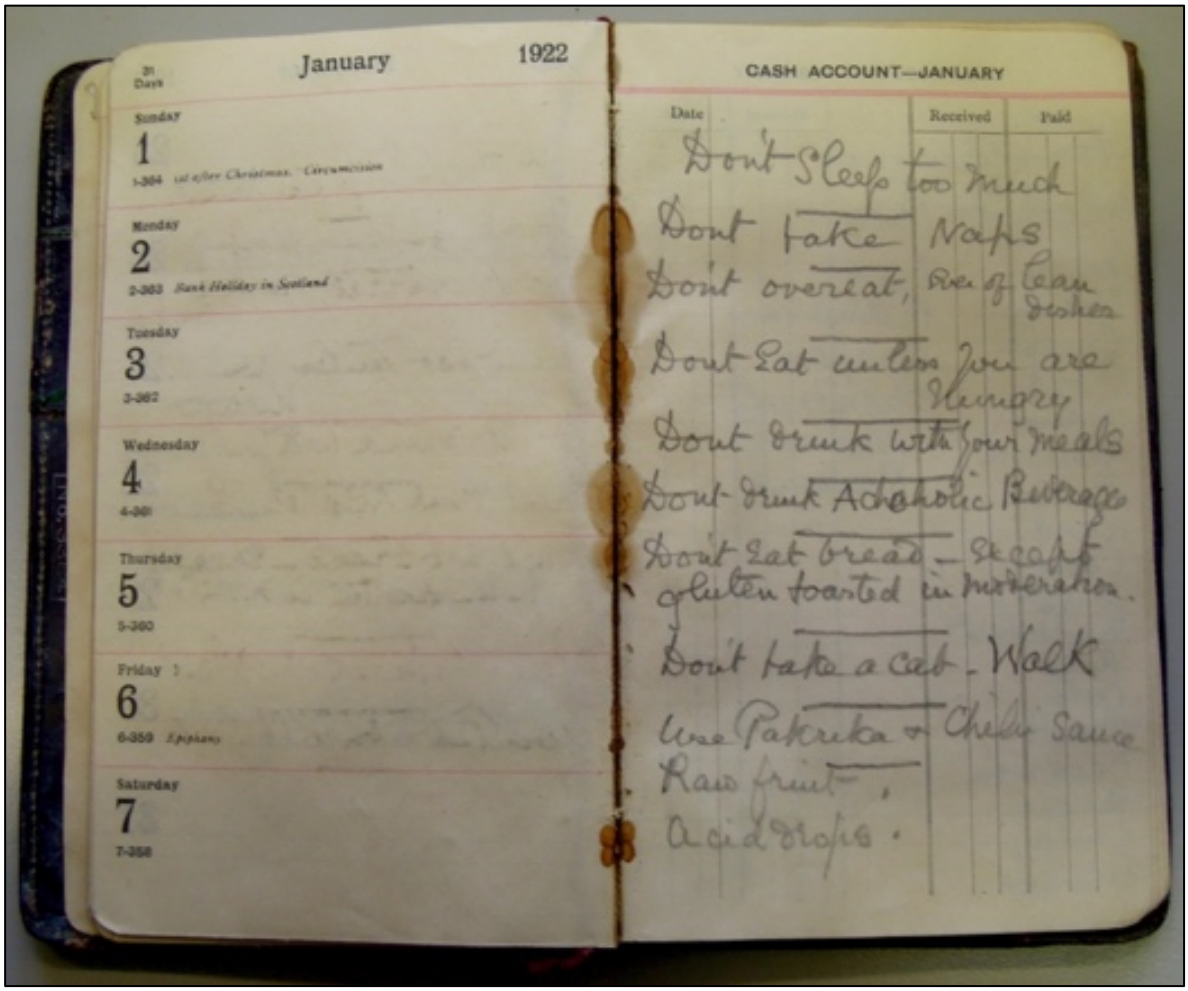


Fig 23. Maud Tree's Diary from January 1922 depicting her list of demands that she makes upon herself.

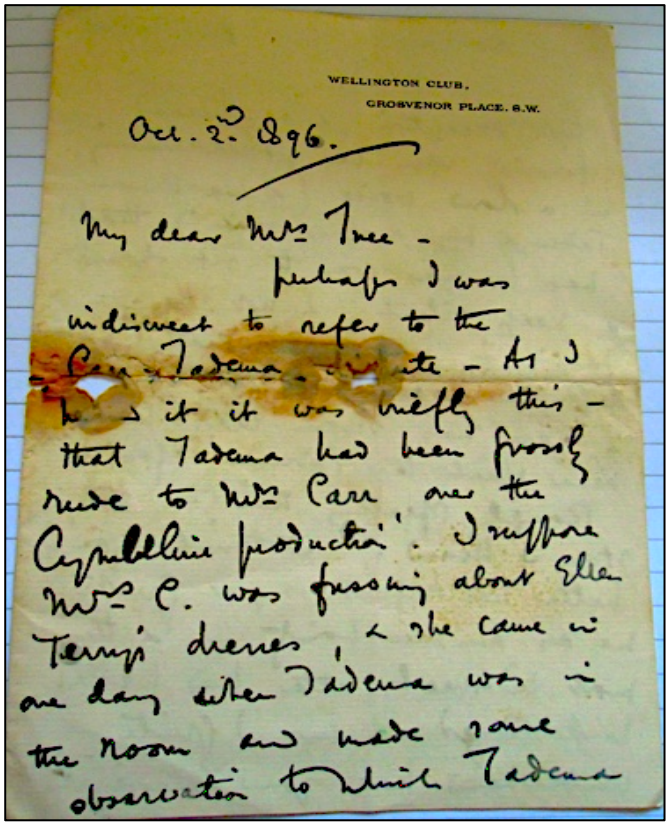
One of the foremost striking diary entries of the collection is this penciled in (for everything in Maud's diaries is penciled) list of personal demands on one's behavior that, for clarity, reads thus: "Don't sleep too much, don't take naps, don't overeat, even of lean dishes, don't eat unless you are hungry, don't drink with your meals, don't drink alcoholic beverages, don't eat bread – except gluten toasted in moderation, don't take a cab, walk, use paprika and chili sauce, raw fruit, acid drops." It appears to be instructions for losing weight, keeping fit and/or healthy. This list is written within a very packed diary in which many social events and appearances at charity functions as well as informal meetings are noted. Maud was a celebrity and highly sought after for high profile balls and fundraisers. This item is

not only striking because of the violence with which she addresses her daily routine but for the ordinariness of it. The list is something that any self-conscious, concerned or high maintenance person might write for themselves. *Good Housekeeping* was published for the first time in the UK in 1922 when this was written and a sudden boom in the popularity of personal care began: "the magazines prospered on the basis of a standard formula comprising fashion, health and beauty tips."[318]. Of course, this may have been advice from a doctor at the time or simply collected pieces of anecdote. The assumption is that it is instructions for her, it could perhaps have been for someone else, yet its location in her private diaries and amongst other small personal monologues about how to be good and kind are difficult to overlook. It is also poignantly written in the first week of January when new year's resolutions are popular but there are no other engagements recorded for that week, only to be abstemious and active. The problem here, is that it is easy to assume that it is written for her, that she did not keep another more private diary that has not ended up here in the collection. The story is romantic and subjective despite being based in factual source evidence. As Helen Freshwater warns, "it is all too easy to become enchanted."[319] When one's occupation as a historical researcher is to fill in the gaps left between and within objects one has to work out what kind of information one wants to interrogate. Prown deliberates, different material yields different kinds of information and the interrogation of each requires differing techniques: "How does one explore the mental landscape, the beliefs, to validate or deny such speculations? Sermons, private diaries, poetry, and fiction are among the sources for the investigator seeking not only facts but also the hints or suggestions of belief. Even if such hypotheses or speculations remain unproved, they are not necessarily invalid."[320] The majority of the Tree Family Archive is made up of Maud's diaries. The next most common item are letters that have been sent to her, most of which are kept in their original envelopes with the stamps attached. They are almost all in pristine condition, unspoiled by light or water damage. This in itself suggest that not only was Maud very particular and precise about what she kept and how she kept it but that she had the means to keep it: the space, the time and the energy. Perhaps she employed people to help her keep this material,

[318] Pugh, Martin (2008) p.174.
[319] Freshwater, Helen (2003) p.10
[320] Prown, Jules David (1986) p.12

perhaps it was her quiet hobby. What we do know is that she wanted it to be kept, to be read posthumously, whether simply for her own nostalgic perusal, we may never know. There is a strong chance that she was fully aware of what would happen to this ephemera when she died, did she believe that they would be of some historical, family, public or literary value or interest? There is a theatricality in the collecting of one's own diaries in which they take on the role of monologue, prompt script, correspondence, autobiography to oneself and perhaps others. Lorraine Daston says that "things" to her book are "dramatis personae"[321] perhaps Maud's collection items were the characters of her collection: of her life? Are collections metonymic or interchangeable for a life? What is left behind a legacy?

[321] Daston, Lorraine (2008) p.11



WELLINGTON CLUB,
GROSVENOR PLACE, S.W.

Oct. 2nd 896.

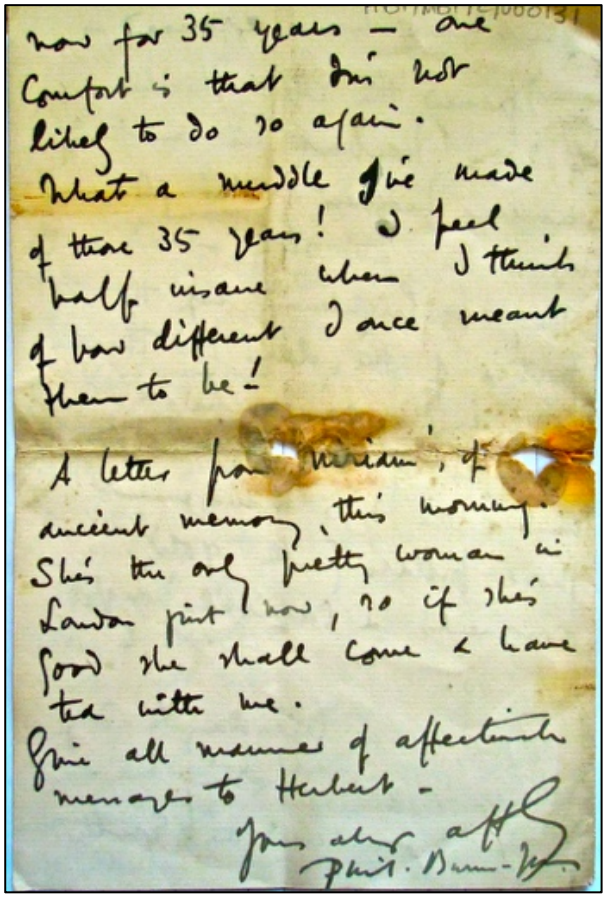
My dear Mrs Tree -

perhaps I was indiscreet to refer to the Carr-Tadema - dispute - As I have it it was briefly this - that Tadema had been grossly rude to Mrs Carr over the Cymbeline production. I suppose Mrs C. was fussing about Ellen Terry's dresses, & she came in one day when Tadema was in the room and made some observation to which Tadema took exception, & he turned furiously upon her, exclaiming in a loud voice (& we know Tadema has a loud voice!) that "her business was to sit down & keep silent & not be heard" - whereupon Mrs C. left the room, naturally indignant & Carr has sworn that he will never speak to Tadema again.

Roughly speaking this is the story I heard. I think you'd better not repeat it, or quote me as an authority - & this most indiscreet letter had better be destroyed - but I quite understand how your curiosity must have been aroused -

I opened the New Theatre to-day - Herbert is making immense progress. He's got up to the 2nd story - They are brightening up the portico of the dear old Theatre, & if anything can make a success of the pit right under the new management those pillars (with gold ornaments & capitals) ought to do so.

I've got a birthday to-day which is rather boring me. I've encumbered the Earth


now for 35 years – and
Comfort is that I'm not
likely to do so again.
What a muddle I've made
of those 35 years! I feel
half insane when I think
of how different I once meant
them to be!

A letter from Miriam, of
ancient memory, this morning.
She's the only pretty woman in
London just now, so if she's
good she shall come & have
tea with me.
Give all manner of affectionate
messages to Herbert –
Yours always affly
Phil. Burne-Jones

Fig 24. Letter from Philip Burne-Jones, artist and the son of poet Edward Burne-Jones, October 2nd 1896:

Mentioning a dispute between Lawrence Alma Tadema (famous Dutch painter who produced theatre and costume designs) and Mrs. Carr about a *Cymbeline* Production they were both involved in. He also mentions the building/refurbishment of Her Majesty's for which Herbert Beerbohm Tree was to become Actor-Manager.

I will begin by sharing the transcript of this item for contemplation:

> My dear Mrs. Tree, perhaps I was indiscreet to refer to the Carr – Tadema dispute. As I hear it it was briefly this – that Tadema had been fiercely rude to Mrs. Carr over the Cymbeline production! I suppose Mrs. C was fussing about Ellen Terry's dresses and she came in one day when Tadema was in the room and made some observation to which Tadema took exception and he turned furious upon her, exclaiming in a loud voice (and we know Tadema <u>has</u> a loud voice!) that "her business was to sit down and keep silent and not be heard" – whereupon Mrs. C. left the room, naturally [illegible word] and Carr has sworn that he will never speak to Tadema again. Roughly speaking this is the story I heard. I think you'd better not repeat it, or quote me as an authority – and this most indiscreet letter had better be destroyed – but I quite understand how your curiosity must have been aroused – I passed the new theatre today, Herbert is making immense progress. He's got up to the 2nd story – They are brightening up the portico of the dear <u>old</u> theatre, and if anything can make a success of the affair [illegible word] under the new management those

> pillars (with gold ornaments and capitals) ought to do so. I've got a birthday today which is rather boring me. I've encumbered the Earth now for 35 years – one comfort is that I'm not likely to do so again. What a muddle I've made of these 35 years! I feel half insane when I think of how different I once meant them to be! A letter from Miriam, of ancient memory, this morning. She's the only pretty woman in London just now, so if she's good she shall come and have tea with me. Give all manner of affectionate message to Herbert. Yours [illegible word] Phil Burne Jones.[322]

This correspondence (of many from Phillip Burne-Jones) is a camp soap opera of an anecdote. It is gossip, testimony and pleasantry, an example of the way in which Burne-Jones wrote most of his letters, with biting humour, sarcasm and an air of intrigue. A painter and socialite himself, this may be a reflection on the circles and chatter of which Maud was a part. What is particularly interesting is that Burne-Jones distinctly suggests that the "most indiscreet" letter should be destroyed and yet here it is, over hundred years later. Maud may well have trusted that it would not be shared in his or her own lifetime or may have enjoyed the idea that it be circulated for humour or titillation's sake. Nonetheless, in the context of this collection it is the reflection on the collector for which it is most valued. The letter straddles the personal and the professional, the private and the public in the mention of theatres in which they both worked and socially frequented. The mention of Herbert Beerbohm Tree's work on Her Majesty's Theatre is illuminating, as he speaks as if the theatre is being built from the ground up and looking particularly more grand than it might have done before. The imagery of a theatre half built in 1896 is evocative, it is a unique perspective, a memory of the very building within which these theatre and performance histories were themselves built. Maud in the domestic sphere reading gossip to Herbert's notable absence with various large scale high profile works she is kept extremely busy upholding the human and social element of the celebrity lives that they led in the dizzy, middle-class heights behind the theatrical industry. The letter is water damaged along the central crease as if it has been opened and closed many times. For what we can behold it is a casual letter penned quickly on Wellington Gentleman's club headed paper, a symbol of the leisure classes. Letters are for the literate, they represent those who could afford the paper, ink and pen, the postage and the time. Collected letters even more so, these items do not offer an insight into how the majority lived, they "may reveal

[322] Burne-Jones, Philip, letter to Maud Beerbohm Tree, October 2nd 1896.

overlooked personality traits or foibles"[323] highlighting human character and relationships but are mostly evidence of the theatricality and drama within which these figures lived: self-aware and conscious of their performance to one another.

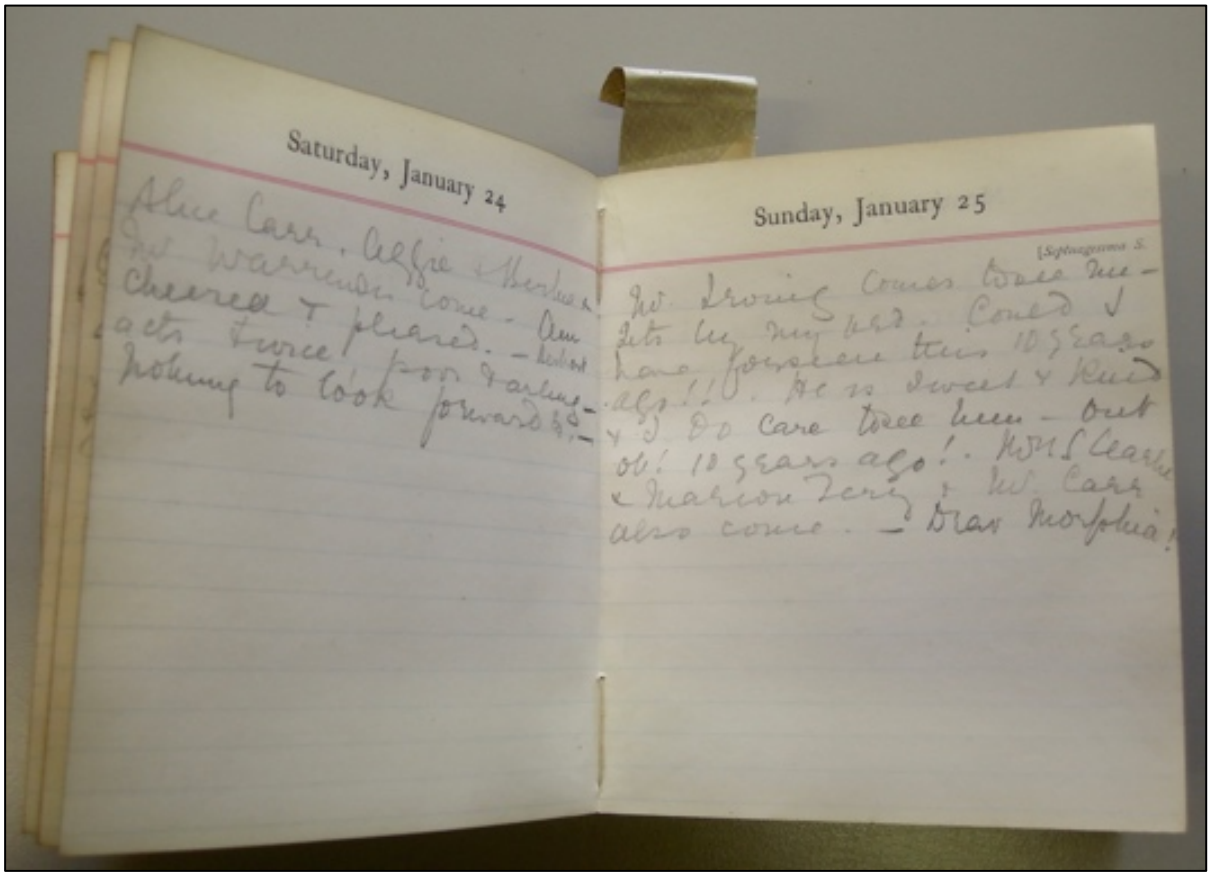


Fig 25. Maud Tree's Diary Sunday January 24th – 25th 1891:

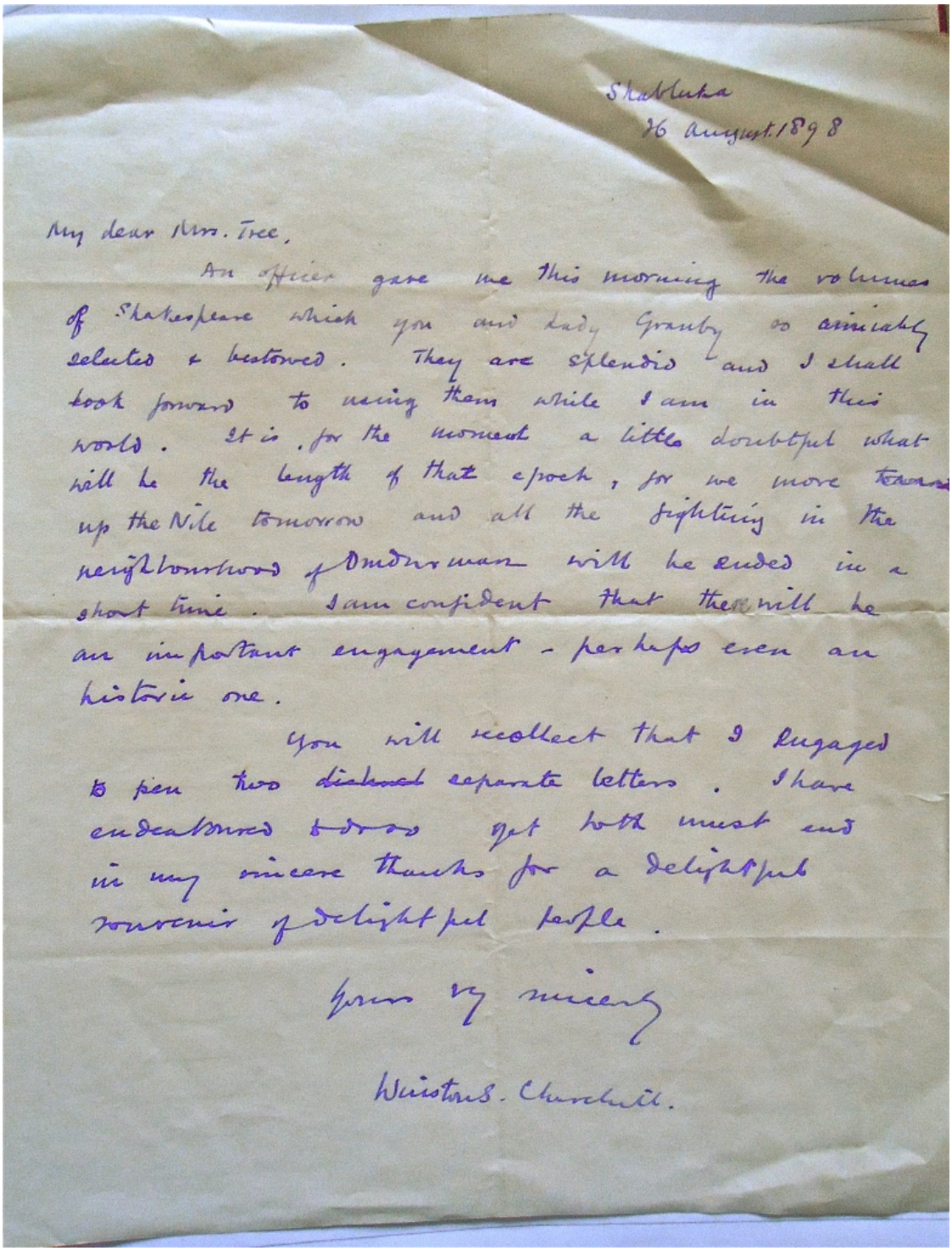
"Mr Irving comes to see me – sits by my bed. Could I have foreseen this 10 years ago!! He is sweet and kind and I do care to see him – but Oh! 10 years ago! […] Dear Morphia!" Maud suffered from rheumatism and was often bedridden in the winter months.

Another diary entry that offers not just an insight in to the performance and self-conscious way in which Maud recites her daily correspondence with the rich and the famous, in this case Henry Irving comes

[323] National Archive In Their Own Words, p.10

to visit her sick bed. We get a glimpse of her girlish fanaticism, fairly swooning at the fact that she has arrived in a world where Henry Irving pops by socially. Ten years previous to this entry in 1881 Maud would have been around 18 years of age perhaps dreaming of a stage career with Irving and now the striking sadness is that she is quite ill in bed, requiring morphine for her pain at the age of 28. Every January for several years there is a similar story for Maud being bedridden and pining for the world outside. Four people including the Mrs Carr (of the previously displayed letter) came to visit her the day before who "all cheered and pleased" but it is Irving who gets the hubristic accolade as giving a medicinal effect on her spirits. The previous day shows that despite her own apparent illness she is aware of mentioning the plight of her husband, writing, "Herbert acts twice, poor darling – nothing to look forward to". This is characteristic of her diaries that she will make a mention of her husband in a good light sometimes even after a violent argument or having been caught with a mistress. There is the effect of having cast herself in this role unable to be released from it. What is also notable is that Maud had intended to write a biography of Herbert after his death and so was collecting with this in mind, particularly after his death perhaps suggesting that these diaries are stages for the stories that might have reached the book. The exhibition of items from this collection do have the effect of "the mad fragmentations that no-one intended to preserve and that just ended up there" that Freshwater posits and then continues to remind us that "in the Archive, you cannot be shocked at its exclusions, its emptinesses, at what is not catalogued." We work with what we have and what we find interesting, perhaps enlightening to others on theatre histories as Freshwater concludes: "it is not that archivists do not tell the whole truth about reality. It is that they *cannot* tell it'"[324]. The poetry and dramatic slant with which this entry is 'staged' for the reader is suspicious but not unexpected in relation to her life and profession, however it does lead the reader in hubris to consider her emotionally, for which I have been guilty, and this must always be considered and held to scrutiny in historical reflection.

[324] Freshwater, Helen (2003) p.15



Shabluka
26 August 1898

My dear Mrs. Tree,

An officer gave me this morning the volumes of Shakespeare which you and Lady Gransby so amicably selected & bestowed. They are splendid and I shall look forward to using them while I am in this world. It is, for the moment a little doubtful what will be the length of that epoch, for we move tomorrow up the Nile tomorrow and all the fighting in the neighbourhood of Omdurman will be ended in a short time. I am confident that there will be an important engagement - perhaps even an historic one.

You will recollect that I engaged to pen two separate letters. I have endeavoured to do so yet both must end in my sincere thanks for a delightful souvenir of delightful people.

Yours very sincerely

Winston S. Churchill.

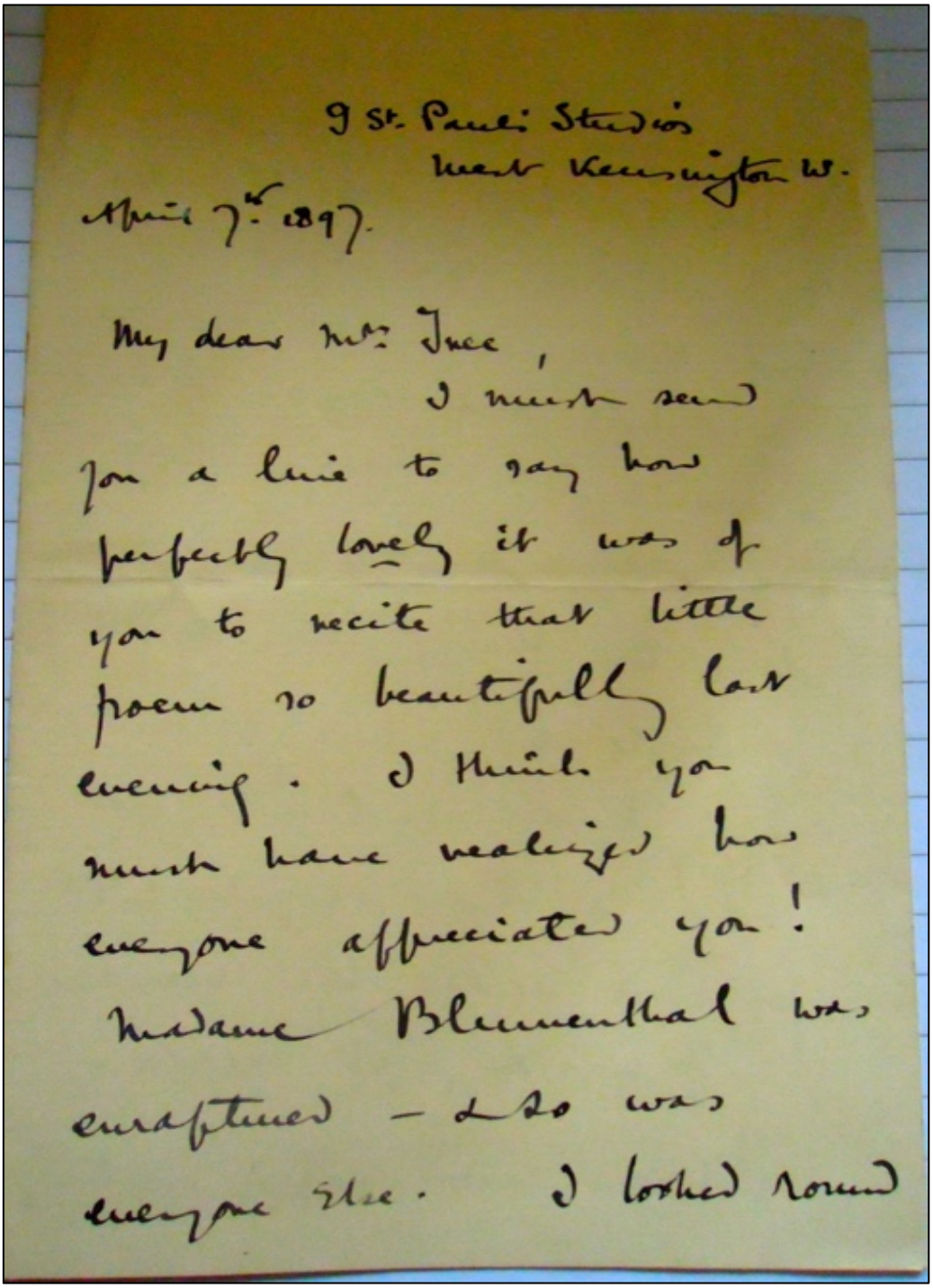
Fig 26. Letter from Winston Churchill, 26th August 1898:

"My dear Mrs. Tree, an officer gave me this morning the volumes of Shakespeare which you and Lady Gransby so admirably selected and bestowed. They are splendid and I shall look forward to using them while I am in this world. It is, for the moment a little doubtful what will be the length of that epoch for we move up the Nile tomorrow and all the fighting in the neighbourhood of Omdurman will be ended in a short time. I am confident that there will be an important engagement – perhaps even an historic one. You will recollect that I engaged to pen two separate letters I have endeavoured to do so yet both must end in my sincere thanks for a delightful souvenir and delightful people. Yours very sincerely,

Winston S. Churchill."

Another beautifully kept item is a hand-written letter from Winston Churchill in Sudan during the Battle of Omdurman which was a famously one-sided revenge battle led by General Kitchener. It is a curious item that speaks of several interesting elements. It demonstrates that, whilst in a warzone, Churchill was writing pleasant thank you letters to ladies in London with access to pristine paper, envelopes and ink. Mrs Tree and her friend Lady Gransby felt it appropriate to send volumes of Shakespeare to the Sudan during a rebel uprising. Despite the cordial tone, Churchill does find time to contemplate his mortality: "I shall look forward to using them while I am in this world. It is for the moment a little doubtful what will be the length of that epoch." Churchill was born into the highest levels of aristocracy and at the time of writing was a Second Lieutenant in the Fourth Hussars Regiment of the British Army and had requested to be posted for battle to see some action, it is not entirely apparent how seriously he was taking this dangerous position and it is suggested that he may have been receiving special privileges since he had paper, pen and ink to send pleasantries. Maud Tree has kept this letter in fine condition once again suggesting pride in being part of the social network of such a high-end aristocracy. It appears to be another celebration of celebrity from Maud in the delicate keeping of this letter. The collection gives a comprehensive impression of the life of the Victorian and Edwardian woman and the priorities of the upper classes as well as what were considered the various duties in the conservative, celebrity and theatrical world. It is an amusing letter in the current context as artefacts become re-politicised over and over again by the nuances of time and space and its reenactment within each framed context. We have a separate knowledge base surrounding the life of Winston Churchill as a man, a politician an instrument in war and a representative of conservative Britishness and it is easy to impress this upon the life and work of the Trees from this letter: "the biography of things in complex societies reveals a similar pattern. In the homogenized world of commodities, an event full biography of a thing becomes the story of the various singularisations of it, of classifications and reclassification in an uncertain world of categories whose importance shifts with every minor change in context."[325]

[325] Koptyoff, Igor (1986) p.90



9 St. Paul's Studios
West Kensington W.

April 7th 1897.

My dear Mrs Tree,

I must send you a line to say how perfectly lovely it was of you to recite that little poem so beautifully last evening. I think you must have realized how everyone appreciated you! Madame Blennenthal was enraptured — & so was everyone else. I looked round

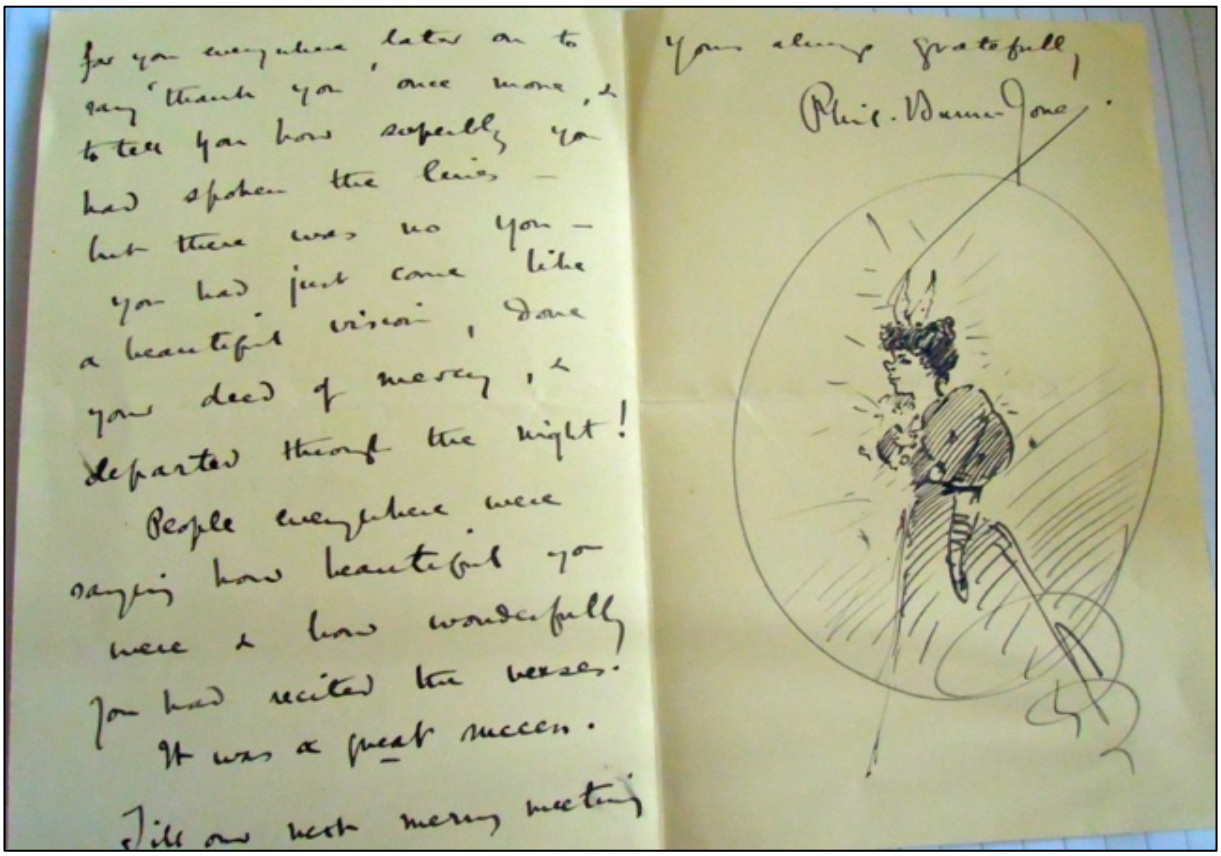


Fig 27. Letter from Philip Burne-Jones about Maud's poetry recital July 7th 1897 with a sketch of Maud in performance:

"My dear Mrs. Tree, I must send you a line to say how perfectly lovely it was of you to recite that little poem so beautifully last evening. I think you must have realized everyone appreciated you! Madame Blumenthal was enraptured – and so was everyone else. I looked round for you everywhere later on to say 'thank you' once more and to tell you how superbly you had spoken the lines – but there was no you – you had just come like a beautiful vision, done your deed of mercy and departed through the night! People everywhere were saying how beautiful you were and how wonderfully you had recited the verses. It was a great success. Till our next merry meeting, yours always gratefully. Phil Burnes-Jones."

Finally, the second letter from Philip Burne-Jones in my selection has a meta-performative nature. Burne-Jones is spectator, performer, documentarian and artist alongside his usual wit and charm. He tells us that Maud Tree gave a highly esteemed poetry recital at a party and looked beautiful. He then drew a picture of Maud in her gown with puffed sleeves, sparkling jewels and surrounded by a shining aura. Hardly an unbiased account but an account nonetheless, more evidence of a private performance than we would ever otherwise have access to.

As endearing as this friendship is between Burne-Jones and Maud, these fleeting appearances at events were business. She was not only the wife of Herbert Beerbohm Tree but also a professional associate, a representative of his theatrical empire, acting as public relation and personal assistant. Her impeccable appearance seems token in this collection item, at once there and then immediately departed she did not stay for pleasantries with Burne-Jones as she was simply marketing some further brand perhaps. After Herbert's death the appearances did not stop but seemed to become more exclusive. There are casually penciled in engagements in her diaries to meet with Royalty: in 1919 she attends "Garden party at Buckingham Palace", in 1921 her diary notes on Wednesday 9th March: "Tea with Princess Christina" and Friday 27th May: "Prince of Wales", and in 1923, "Princess Royal's Party" and even "Meeting King George" on Wednesday 14th September 1932. This letter only sharpens the perception that besides acting in lead roles in Herbert Beerbohm Tree's Shakespearean productions (she was also known for comedy roles and her general wit) but she could turn her talents out at social gatherings without compromising her professional integrity. Besides all this celebrity, Maud dealt with family finances and business records with scrutinizing meticulousness, noting down expenditures on domestic provisions including servants wages, communication costs, medical, cosmetic and social events as well as travel costs including fine details like an entry in 1905 that listed "Using the tube: 3 pence, Taxi to Harrods: 1 shilling tuppence, Beggar: 2 pence, Whole day spend £1 11 shillings and 5 pence". Maud was an actress before she married Herbert in 1882 and continued acting up until her death in 1937, twenty years after Herbert died, and as the new brand of Lady Tree she participated in the support of theatre on film.

Conclusion: Uniqueness of Style and Motive and Impact on Relationship Between Collector-object-researcher

The collection contains objects that date back to the 1870s, before Maud and Herbert were married, and there are diary entries from Maud until her death in 1937 giving it all the appearance of being for the most part a project by and perhaps for Maud Tree. Maud continued to document her family life after Herbert died in 1917 seemingly saving and collecting all her diaries and letters for posterity and potentially for recognition of the vast amount of work she did to support Herbert Beerbohm Tree's

reputation as a public figure. There is also paperwork pertaining to a book that Maud intended to have published about Herbert Beerbohm Tree after his death: particularly research notes and the publisher's corrections and suggestions in letters. The sometimes-uncomfortable intimacy of the contents of the diaries, particularly comments from Maud on Herbert's extra-marital affairs, make this a very personalized collection and yet acts as a message left to be accessed by others later. Perhaps since these were subjects that were not talked about in polite society and are secret by nature generally, the potential for this incriminating detail to be made known and shared later could have been of some vindicating comfort, after all the option to burn such evidence was always present.

The Tree Family Archive came to the University of Bristol Theatre Collection in 1982, purchased with assistance from National Heritage Memorial Fund, donations from University of Bristol, Friends Appeal and Victoria and Albert Purchase Grant Fund. The archive was held by the Tree family and sold as collection of letters, notebooks, diaries, manuscript notes and other intimate items like love letters, genealogy notes and typescripts. Other purchases and donations were then made between 1982-1987. The Tree Family Archive additions were made in 1987 including Press Cutting folders from 1890s, programmes of Herbert Beerbohm Tree correspondence. These were donated by a member of the Tree family. In 1992-2002 there were various individual purchases. In 2002 correspondence between Glynne Wickham and David Tree and in 2006 there was the donation of a vast extension of correspondence between Herbert Beerbohm Tree and his friend Olivia Truman which was donated after a period of loan.

The collection can be seen to act as an analogous formation of the separateness of the marriage and work between Herbert and Maud. Their lives seem from this collection to have been theatrical profession, association and in habituation. Letter and diaries are inherently dramatic as they outline the human endeavours, actions, intentions and consequences of these in a descriptive and storytelling format. There are also many more letters and diaries of Maud than there is of Herbert, outlining not only the separation between them but that Maud seemed determined to express herself through some medium. Many days were uneventful when she was younger but she fills everyday with work and

meetings dedicated to the work of Herbert. The in-depth diaries of Maud are common for women who had privileges to use them: education, money, time, perceived emotional intelligence of women at the time as well as indicative of their predominant domestication and leisurely pursuits. However, it is the meticulous press cuttings that Maud has professionally commissioned about Herbert's death, his obituaries, about his funeral, about his life and work and all the telegrams and sympathy cards that she kept that are telling about the devotion and efficiency of Maud's interchangeably personal and professional relationship with Herbert that are most prominent. An indication of the uniqueness of this collection is in the sheer vastness of the size and extent of the collection. The attention to detail, the logistics of keeping all of these items in such fine condition was set in motion by Maud, it seems, an avid documenter of the Tree family life and her own, which she sometimes felt was dull and pointless.

> The mode of thinking with things, how things helpfully epitomise and concentrate complex relationships that cohere without being logical in the strict sense, much as images in Freud's interpretation of dreams or certain figures of speech – allegory, synechdoche, prosopopoeia – condense, displace, and concretize. Thinking with things is very different from thinking with words, for the relationship between sign and signified is never arbitrary – nor self-evident.[326]

[326] Daston, Lorraine (2008) p.20

CHAPTER FOUR

PERFORMATIVITY AND CREATIVE DISSEMINATION OF IDEAS

With the curatorial thinking of Chapter Three demonstrated, this chapter will continue by looking at the choice of artistic reflection that I employed which was inspired by exhibition techniques, display formats and the study of museology. The curatorial study and sharing of these University of Bristol case studies outlined the theatricality with which collectors can evoke and frame a story of the past and this sentiment that theatres and museums have more than a little in common in terms of how they embrace the linguistics of narrative and the phenomenology of encounter to disseminate ideas about history using archival material. The performativity leant to and offered by these museological practices of display is a key part of understanding the potential of the close study of the reciprocal relationship between collector-object-researcher that this thesis has embarked on as it re-iterates the social and cultural relations of human experience with the material in the world discussed in chapter two. I will discuss how the museum and archive have become the cultural sharing hub of historical teaching and learning in the western world and the global and local politics that this entails with questions of appropriation, exclusivity and power relations still at stake in the forming of exhibition for public consumption. The theoretical root of this being that a focus on the ideas and levels of performativity is a most rich and enlightening critical tool for helping us to understand the state and potential of this imperative arena for knowledge acquisition.

Archival Dynamism

Our embrace of the theatrical potential of the museum is often traced to a cultural shift that occurred when, as Hedstrom and King report it, "the transition of library and archival collections during the 19th century from private property to public goods, designed for use by an increasingly literate public and supported with public funds"[327], prompted scholars to analyse how knowledge centres like archives, museums and Universities can educate on a broader level. The Twentieth century museology has been occupied more with studying what these institutions of visual, image and object based culture are

[327] Hedstrom and King (2004) p.15

allowing us to see, what they are not and more importantly how they are allowing us to see it and to what affect. The museum has an agreed logic of priority in terms of conservation and sharing which is why the haptic learning experience is always considered negatively: whether it be in the protection of the artefacts behind glass or security alarms, the bodies are always considered as something to be guided strictly in proximity to the shared archival item in display. An investigation of the performativity of archives, museum spaces, reading rooms, galleries as theatrical, as mechanisms, rules and choreographies for the body and the intellect in play together through research can offer a forwarding of these ideals into the future history practices. Susan Bennett is occupied with this process in her writing on theatre and museums, starting by saying: "Both theatre and museums require an infrastructure supported by a diverse range of technical and intellectual skills, acts of interpretation and mediation, and eventually an audience."[328] Therefore, suggesting that it can also be deconstructed. Both performance and documentation are organic human creations, they are processes that keep developing and generating. To make researchers/visitors/audiences aware of this is a problematic task for the 'reader' of archive collections: the re-enactors of histories. The proposal is that understanding the performativity of the collector, themselves and the objects beyond them is key to a pertinent and new telling of history.

The objects of remembrance chosen for exhibition leave their previous functional materiality in the moment to be archived for posterity but we must always ask, which context is being prioritised in this process and why? As Susan Bennett returns to in her interrogation of various theatrical museum spaces and techniques: "whose experience matters?"[329] Exhibition from performance and theatre archives is the re-enactment of performance through documentation and choices about 'which history?' are being made at all creative stages. A comprehension of the previous liveness and human context of objects is important to avoid producing a taxidermic effect. To stuff a static object to represent movement in stasis can have the effect of losing the idea of the ephemerality, of possible meanings that collected objects

[328] Bennett, Susan (2013) p.4
[329] Bennett, Susan (2013) p.64

had in action. What can we do to avoid collections becoming "dead issue"[330] or having the potentially more serious consequence of neglecting poorly represented, marginal and previously unheard voices in collections. Much literature has been produced in the wake of post-colonial, post-structural and postmodern thinking: Peggy Phelan, Amelia Jones, Rebecca Schnieder and Philip Auslander among others have sought to remind us that Derrida and Bordieau's ideas that archives are dead due to their institutionalization and de-vitalisation of once living artefacts and this chapter will interrogate those ideas in relation to my own findings in archival and curatorial practice.

Elizabeth Wood and Kiersten Latham support Marini's plea to keep archives vital positing that human encounters with objects that move towards imagining other human experience is all that both theatre and the museum exhibit have need for to create historical discourse: "In this way the encounter with museum objects provides the visitor with the range of possible human experiences, a personal sense of the life of another as it was lived, or simply provides access to the vital and fundamental aspects of being human—a phenomenological museum curriculum"[331]. Similarly, Andre Lepecki talks of our ability to "corporeally archive"[332] and Elin Diamond is adamant that performance and the archive are meant to be aligned with one another:

> Apparently dormant until the labor of interpretation begins, the archive soon takes on its own voice: it reads us as much as we read it. And like performance, the archive has secrets, "ghosts", as Derrida puts it, that promise an untold story. If I analogise the archive to performance it is not to be fanciful. Jon McKenzie reminded us years ago that to speak of performance is to invoke hidden systems of meaning and power, from the molecular to the spectacular. And, writing of the legal implications of social performance, Joseph Roach notes that there are no trivial rituals.[333]

Realistically though, there are barriers to the dynamism of archival material. When referencing her work as a curator at the V&A, Kate Dorney reminds us very literally, that one's movement as a researcher is prescribed within the archival reading room: "Because the majority of our collections are paper-based, we have a very hands-on relationship with our users. Visiting this collection isn't like, for

[330] Marini, Francesca (2008) p.29
[331] Wood and Latham (2011) p.52
[332] Lepecki, Andre (2010) p.34
[333] Diamond, Elin (2008) p.6

example, walking around the V&A's sculpture galleries and studying the exhibits independently. In the performance collection, we not only retrieve the material and deliver it to researchers; we explain the various systems researchers need to use to search our holdings, answer questions about provenance and suggest related material. It's a mediated experience, and it may be that this is where tension between users and curators arises"[334]. My own experience as a researcher at University of Bristol Theatre Collection echoed some of these concerns in that I felt it necessary in my recalcitrance to deviate from prescription and find a personal trajectory through the material in order to consider new and independent ways of encountering items from the past. Similarly, as a curator of exhibitions in the museum space, I had the opportunity as a student to create an exhibition that investigated and imparted the story that I found interesting as a result of this process. The "tension" that Dorney mentions is likely to vary from institution to institution based on the access and agency that is offered researchers by archive directors and curators but it will remain a necessary part of archival and museum ontology and thus research that we cannot avoid. For the foreseeable we will always require the moments of encounter with paper-based archives that digitalisation cannot offer us. As Freshwater says with reference to passport, driving licence and utility bill to identify the individual: "we still privilege the paper document authentication" [335]

To keep paper-based archives vital and relevant these institutions, spaces and organisations may have to attempt to match what the more frequently accessed digital recordings of performance and theatre do for researchers. Video and sound recordings give us aural and visual impressions of the viscerality of the body in practice, they inform us of movement, something three dimensional artefacts are seen to obscure in their innate stasis. What can be done to allow three dimensional objects of theatre and performance documentation to offer this representation of the body in movement to the same or a similar effect? Why is it necessary? When it comes to costumes it is a slightly different matter, for example, Donatella Barbieri suggests that materials have the power to speak for themselves, in her book on costume and materiality: "What becomes apparent is the richness of the subject, its liveness, even when

[334] Dorney, Kate (2010) p. 26
[335] Freshwater, Helen (2003) p.7

working with archived costume, defined by the intimate connection costume creates between maker, performer and audience and by its instrumentality in the creation of live performance."[336] Costume possesses this "aura"[337] to speak across time: "connecting across frameworks of ideas […] echoed across centuries" but what of the paper-based material: finances, agreements, letters, receipts, invoices, press cuttings, newsletters, programmes and posters? What can be done to inspire that to "echo"? Since there are always facsimile talks about decreasing handling based on the potential for historicity to be depleted through erosion, the inherent anxieties around loss in archival institutions is always present and thus prohibitive to movement. Although it is possible to achieve the sense of movement with the exhibition of costume: mannequins, frames and rigging can taxidermically arrange them to at least expand the length of their material as if in motion but as Susan Bennett laments when she encounters her hero, Brian Eno's costume at the V&A, it is "little more than a clue about what a performance might have been like"[338]. Perhaps costume in conversational arrangememnt with the paper-based archival material like photographic evidence and stage directions may hint a little more at demonstrating dynamism both in remembering the performance of the past and in inviting people to think differently with them, have new ideas not romantic old ones. We can say what digitised information does not include: the potential for surface to surface interaction, yet the medium of exhibition often has a closedness, a physical separation through display cabinets, vitrines and wall hangings and a 'please do not touch' policy that still exacerbates this distance.

Matthew Reason points out that, "this ability to touch items and objects from the past is, in itself, one of the key attractions of the archive"[339] and yet for the above-mentioned reasons on preservation, is not a privilege translated into the use of exhibition to disseminate ideas and inspire new ones. We are privileged to be able to do this as private researchers, archive workers and/or curators for exhibition but imparting this privilege, maneuvering it out towards the public seems only to be possible through the narrative form with which we invite objects to converse with one another and thus be creatively

[336] Barbieri, Donatella (2017) p.211
[337] Benjamin, Walter (1936) p.8
[338] Bennett, Susan (2013) p.30
[339] Reason, Matthew (2003) p.3

imagined by visitors remotely from touching proximity.

If matter is perception, as Husserl says, bodies are "something touches which is touched"[340], we orient our way in the world using touch: encounter between subject and object is the moment of more than one present entity, the toucher and the touched become the same ontologically when we talk of our orientation with matter, which moves towards which?[341] This surface to surface possibility for a discourse to be initiated between visitor and archival material, on a pedagogical level, is present in Romaneck and Lynch's close studies of object-based-learning, in which they tell us that "working with objects strengthens learning, as the sense of touch can lead to a more memorable learning experience. It has been established that "object-handling" has a long-lasting effect and relationship with memory, more so than text-based learning often has"[342] Perhaps the "echo"[343] we seek is spiritual and/or emotional, rooted in the corporeal in themselves as responses to stimuli. Helen Chatterjee says, for example, that touch in object-based-learning can be "therapeutic"[344], perhaps suggesting that it acts on the body in emotional and spiritual ways. There are no answers to this dilemma accept perhaps to give the closest impression to touch one can give, the imaginative vision of touch. To present the item and let it be approached and walked around, remind us of its human use, objective, intention and purpose for collection. Present what Danbolt calls a "sense of temporal touch across time"[345].

Conservation issues must be taken seriously and if it is perceived that there is no substitute for the physical beholding of collection objects in connecting researchers to their human provenance and theatrical circumstance, their action and movement, their handling and usage. The argument that can be made is that failing to address this distance between the body and the object in the dissemination of historical narratives, through exhibition, for example, leads to the danger of archival history research only being interested in the abstract intellectual text of the academy avoiding presentness of objects;

[340] Husserl, Edmund (1989) p.155
[341] Ahmed, Sara (2006) p.54
[342] Romaneck and Lynch (2008) p.284
[343] Bardieri, Donatella (2017)
[344] Chatterjee, Helen (2010) p.3
[345] Danbolt, Mathias (2010) p.104

their smell, state and feel. Object based research hits an institutional wall here in terms of its potential for inspiring broad humanist histories, as the relationship between body and object in the reception of histories is demeaned and its performative potential for creative sharing of experiential information limited.

If the archive staff were to acquaint visitors with the mechanics of resource treatment and handling through physical engagement with collection items, not only would they learn an important process in comprehending history through personal, subjective and emotional preparation with objects but learning how to handle objects correctly can communicate the conservational ethic of the archive. This may encourage visitors and researchers to look differently, find their own "visual language" and exchange it. It may be true that however one accesses materials of historical interest, it is all positive exposure in a sector that struggles to incite interest without hands on engagement. Bennett describes this problem: "Theatre Museum's use of traditional strategies of display (a choice determined at least as much by its tiny budget and limited space as by more philosophical concerns) certainly failed to reproduce the appeal […], of any live performance. The problem for a museum of theatre and performance is not the lack of an archive, but precisely its possession of it."[346] She calls the stasis of once vital costumes the "performance of absence" and that "contemporary cultural consumers want/need to be part of the action"[347]. Is not performance and subsequent documentation of performance by nature the "performance of absences"? The fear of prioritising haptic engagement in the meeting between the individual visitor and archival material in exhibition is that "creativity in reception is one more consumable directed not at any social benefit but towards the instantiation and affirmation of an individual, premised on the economic wherewithal to participate."[348] Perhaps this should be viewed positively, like the unquantifiability of audience's memory of performance?

Digitalised, virtual history may be popular for its breadth of access to information, and rightly so, as

[346] Bennett, Susan (2013) p.62
[347] Ibid. p.60
[348] Ibid. p.77

the age of digital comprehension expands and globalises but the archive must urgently remember the *difference* in readability of the three-dimensional materials in their possession. This is to say that change in the specificity of different kinds of information literacy is needed for inclusive purposes. Touch can ignite imaginations and legitimate the bodily presence of researchers amongst collections and so this may be useful in museum spaces too. There are myriad "encounters" that can take place with displayed objects and the stories that they disseminate and visitors may in fact need this.

There are many ways in which exhibition can be alienating even with the best of intentions. I have found that overloaded vitrines in museums where the entire collection appears to be deposited lead to a counter-productive experience of potential stories of the past. It paradoxically leaves one with a blasted stereotype, a broad idea of a past, despite the dearth of material that is there to ponder. It serves only to push one to neglect the individual experience amongst the ephemera, to gloss over and move on, as if being spoon-fed something expected and already considered. One such exhibition was at Bristol's MShed, whose galleries opened originally with displays that were formed on the back of a well-meaning project to invite an artificial collection of ephemera from the public relating to the history of Bristol. There is a display case that holds kept/collected objects from several people about local geography, industry and culture: called the people's museum for this reason. Perhaps in fear of not allowing everyone's story to be told, they appeared to display everything. The subject seems broadly to be the history of industry in Bristol which in one cabinet includes ephemera from the workers of the Fry's chocolate factory, the Will's Tobacco Factory and the Rolls Royce Aerospace at Filton Airfield and many others.[349] The result is that the personal encounters are lost, the flesh behind the collected material, the colour, human context of a time and a place and the richness and mythos of culture in daily enterprise and economic contribution to the local area. Perhaps in this sort of instance, to pare down an exhibition display to one or two objects of dynamic and multi-dimensional interest would serve to nurture the uniqueness and personalisation of materials. This is not to suggest that each item be synecdoche or

[349] Anecdotally, for example, my own Grandparents happened to have worked in those industries and I learnt less from all the ephemera in the case than in five minutes in conversation with one of them.

representative of a whole collection but to offer more exposure to broader subject matter. The inclusion of personal stories is displayed elsewhere in the museum which offers an important balance for ones museological encounter with diversity of heritage in the city. Perhaps these could be of use in conjunction with the items of choice for display. From experience, to be bombarded is to be overwhelmed, as appealing as it is to show everything fascinating in an archive collection, to translate this material into digestible instalments might, paradoxically, be more diversifying. The installation of materials is therefore just as important as the material itself in generating ideas. As an exhibition curator myself I have been guilty of both allowing things to speak too much for themselves and over filling cases with a particular agenda in mind for the reading of it. The answer seemed to me to let the item speak for itself to a degree but to always initiate a conversation with it and the following items used around it. The cross-over in the relational work that the curator does with archive material in display is always mirroring that motive and drive that the collector had to begin with. For this reason, in order to get the most out of the varying histories of archival material, the human context of the collectors should be offered in exhibition. The ideal for inspiring new thinking with material in exhibition spaces of the Mshed's size is to perform more regularly, i.e. display little and often, in instalments for various narratives and disciplines, in various conversations with various objects of varied origin and context.

On the other hand of the argument, the anxiety still remains that archival items are not seeing the light of day where they ought. When investigating The Women's Theatre Collection, I found that there was such a sprawling wealth of information within the collection due to the fact that personal collections had been added to the umbrella agenda of unpublished women's theatre, that these smaller archives were not often handled. Was this because the information was not interesting, relevant or valuable within them? Perhaps due to the fact that they are submerged beneath the overarching weight of the whole collection? The style of artificial collecting here has come up against a paradox in that the collectors have intended to bring to the fore the stories of women's theatre and performance and yet by being so general have served to obscure some of the more poignant stories there are to be read in the smaller details. Encouraging researchers to be with the material in this archive is of utmost importance to their improved use but we can make meaning from the seeming negation of stories here as well.

It has often been asked whether a performance is a performance without an audience, inviting me to ask the question: is the archive meaningful without human interaction? One may argue that the length of time that a collection has gone unopened, seen or touched does bear meaning but the significance of that information can only be analysed and shared once the collection has been accessed. Similarly, the time, energy and emotion that has gone into the collecting process to materialise the collection within the archive (as well as the work of the archivist, keepers, conservationists and cataloguers where relevant) already imbues the collection's presence in time and space with meaning. Yet again, this information only emerges when the sources are pressed to reveal it. The archive collection, much like a piece of theatre or performance with no audience, needs to have visitors/researchers enter into the oral and creative culture that comes from access and sharing in order to bear meaning. The interaction of bodies does matter in research and dissemination.

Bodies Matter

In archival research, scrapbooks are interesting examples of how the body of the collector can be visualized, the self-conscious process of isolating an object of interest, for example, Arnold Ridley's scrapbooks of press cuttings: he took a newspaper, sought out the article, cut it out with scissors, bought a scrapbook, glued it into his scrapbook, and labelled it. This was then followed by hundreds of others that are placed in personally chosen sequence, in this case by performance and date. Researchers can then imagine the body of Arnold Ridley forming the narrative, physically engaging with their own idea of posterity, memorial, monument and memory. They consciously lay out these objects with the intention of someone picking up the scrapbook and reading through it. Bromfield and Cavanagh say it is like, "one soul shouting across space to another soul"[350]: a gift across time, historical items within an historical item for us to handle, smell and see. The vision here is helpful in comprehending the intention of the collection, the circumstances under which they were created, the 'vision' that the collector had for their chosen objects but also the passion, interest and 'delight' that they have taken in preparing

[350] Bromfield and Cavanagh (2009) p.81

these items to impart a story much like the motive in exhibition. Another reflection of Grayson Perry's which implicates the importance of recognizing the emotional motive for collecting in order to work out what it can say to us is useful here: "sometimes the connection is in their function, sometimes in their subject and often in their form. One thing that connects all my choices is my delight in them."[351] Here "delight" represents the emotional and creative response to archival materials, it is an interchangeable concept within the theoretical framework of this thesis that resonates with that of "spirit", "encounter" and "play": phenomenological instances of emotional and physical interaction with materials and one worth including in exhibition perhaps as an instantaneously personal and social (intersubjective) and empathetic human response.

Wood and Latham state that connecting in this way highlights "human potential" for comprehension of 'things' in the world:

> Embracing a more phenomenological approach to interactions with objects is one way that museums can provide greater access for visitors to connect with the meaning of human potential. This is an increasingly important consideration for museums, particularly as our cultural preferences turn toward the virtual. In these ways, imaginative touch and the phenomenological awareness that museums can provide creates a space for visitors to build on the inexhaustible thickness of the things they create, the world of possibility that surrounds them. [352]

The phenomenology of archival interaction, the subject/object encounter and how it opens out to communication with and between materials for historiographical research is to imagine that the audience, essentially, *is* the archive. This interaction, is being part of the social cultural material oneself, creating and carrying the ideas much the same in sentiment to the body in re-enactment as Paul Clarke suggests, "the body in re-enactment becomes a kind of archive, one of the remains of an art-historical event and a host to cultural memory"[353]. Taking Wood and Latham's idea from the extract above: the museum and archive exhibition should be the space within which visitors can comprehend "the world of possibility that surrounds them" or in the context of this thesis, the world of possible histories that

[351] Perry, Grayson (2011) p.11
[352] Wood and Latham (2011) p.64
[353] Clarke, Paul (2013) p.373

surrounds them. As a medium for disseminating these encountered meanings from human interaction with collections the exhibition process needs to enter into the same normalised sharing of stories with strangers that has been afforded the digital world. How can this level of circulation of and discourse on objects in visual and material culture be extended to the practices in the archive and museum? If we have established that access and sharing is what makes the archive, what then of its potential? Particularly in reference to performance and theatre collections in the context of this thesis, what, if anything, is lost in the archival process from collection to history and what can be gained or re-gained in the subsequent dissemination of ideas? "New approaches to the exhibition challenge the production of a single coherent interpretation and instead provide many points of entry that the viewer might interrogate and weigh. Decolonizing, […] should inspire visitors to act as "critical consumers". This is a practice that […] relies on deeply performative effects."[354]

Archival Drive

The drive for the business collection like that of the Desperate Men begins with a performance or theatre company who feel the desire to 'save' their collected objects. They may harbour significant anxieties about the continued life of both the company and the objects they collate. They may also incline towards an archiving body that they can trust with the rights to objects, with an ethic or 'spirit' that they can relate to, as the Desperate Men demonstrate in their following of the archiving footsteps of their contemporaries: Forkbeard Fantasy, Welfare State International, Circomedia. Archives in this sense become a cultural destination, part of the artistic journey for the artist/collector/object. In particular, for acrobatic, dance, street, physical or travelling performance company collections like the Desperate Men, the movement involved in the forming of all stories of their performance history is finally evacuated from the objects upon collection. This implied 'necessary movement' of the objects from their functional origin, apart from the conservation practicalities, is a spiritual necessity whereby the objects need to fulfil part of their purpose even in archival stasis, beyond ephemerality. By being aired, catalogued and relocated for potential exhibition an awareness of this movement can move the

[354] Bennett, Susan (2013) p.19

researcher to understand part of the life-cycle of the objects. The dichotomy between spiritual and material value is also a significantly similar trope of theatre and performance as a genre of art: money versus idea. We can see this in the example of the Desperate Men collection as the objects are available but the company has not had the funds to open their archive to cataloguing. A dynamic agenda then for cataloguing and curation is a preamble to further access/research as it is much in the same vain as encouraging audiences to performances. Our curiosity for theatre exhibitions is to see the objects and imagine their momentary use. The exhibition is enactment and re-enactment of a kind of virtual reality in itself: a virtual history for us to ponder as audience.

An awareness of all of these different kinds of framings discussed is necessary in order to allow the items to do what they can for posterity. Tracy C. Davis posits that in order for history to impact socially and culturally archival research must "inspire researchers to locate and tap unusual types of evidence"[355] Collections are active, in device and in dissemination, and must be seen by researchers and collectors alike to be emerging not definitive. This is not only necessary for diversifying responses to them but also in order to instil confidence in collectors that collections are going to an environment that will maintain the items' longevity. Archival dynamism is based on the peaks and troughs of interest, fashion, fetish and trend in research so it must also be remembered that, within the troughs, stored objects may be forgotten, affected by media coverage, cultural shift, moments of social and political crisis. From this forgotten status a new and clean slate for developing stories is technically available if one desires to access it. It is about seeing the potential story in all parts of the life-cycle of objects of archival items. This can be more easily recognized if we understand the performativity of an objects existence.

The positivity of this palimpsestic view of histories, objects acquiring meaning through movement from context to context indicates the significance of drawing awareness to the diversification of histories: researchers comprehending what has been done before and why, contextually. This awareness can allow researchers to reflect back on cultural movements in history writing through the archive with a level of

[355] Davis, Tracy C. (2009) p.64

dramatic irony and endeavour to make new and pertinent histories. Some of the agendas for the collections I explored as my case studies are starkly set out for the researcher. The Arnold Ridley and Eric Jones Evans collections in particular seem to lead one through a systematically chronological journey from the beginning of their careers to their deaths which are fascinating as whole documents (due in great part to the fact that they are catalogued) in themselves but we miss out on the value of the idiosyncrasies of smaller stories within if we are too rigidly guided. Arnold Ridley's plays, for example, may be interpreted very differently if one isolates his magazine journalism for 'Men Only', a prominently misogynistic publication and displays it for exhibition next to his play scripts. Or Eric Jones Evans' transcript of an oral history interview full of his jaunty expressions next to his rejection letters or bad reviews, allowing one to make up their own mind about the impact of the collectors' career and experiences in time.

What can make exhibitions as a medium so inspiring in this way is relating to what Olalquiaga calls the "vicarious" way we experience visual and material culture in the world, through our comprehension of representative signs:

> Experience is mainly available through signs: things are not lived directly but rather through the agency of a medium, in the consumption of images and objects that replace what they stand for. Such rootlessness accounts for the high volatility and ultimate transferability of culture in postmodern times [...] Ironically enough, vicariousness is similar to the classic understanding of aesthetic enjoyment; which is founded on a symbolically distanced relationship to phenomena. This symbolic connection, which used to protect the exclusivity of aesthetic experience by basing it on the prerequisites of trained sensibility and knowledge has given way to the more ordinary and accessible passageway provided by popular culture.[356]

Exhibition is a creative and public response to something that was formerly exclusive and imbued with what Olalquiaga calls the "prerequisites of trained sensibility and knowledge"; the exhibition is a poetical (or "symbolically distanced") response to the phenomena of archival research that affords audiences the "accessible passageway provided by popular culture". The premise here is that we are already trained as an audience for the format and narrative devices of exhibitions, display cases and

[356] Olalquiaga, Celeste (2009) p.393

installations (and thus collections in their rawer form). This can have the effect of making us complicit and not active in the change exhibition can offer historiographical comprehensions. The "re-enactment"[357], "re-membering", re-production or "re-framing"[358], the movement and re-contextualisation of objects that is applied in exhibition by the curator/s also occurs naturally in the audience's perception of things. It is for the most part favourable to sight, suitably performative and theatrical not only for drama collections but for all collections in order to re-play ideas of their original context. However, what of the suggested bountiful nature of surface to surface interaction afforded researchers in the archive? Would this be too much for the ethics and practicalities of conservation for the archive to handle? Is it even necessary? Is one person's perspective of history at a time enough for the future of archival research?

In 1936, Benjamin was concerned, in the modernist way, about the "Mechanical Age" and "Reproduction", re-framing 'originals' is always unique production. To re-frame is to compare, to make visible unexpected corrections and contradictions, identifying art and theatre history as remembrance and re-coding. Today it is important to try and embrace the transitional phenomena that occurs in re-enactment, re-production, re-capitulation as instigators in history of 're-membering'. To re-member must we not dis-member? The performative act of the collector, the researcher and the object is inherent in the writing of history, to be more aware of it is simply to comprehend more broadly the collections' potential historicity.

Theatre and Performance Exhibition

An example of what can be achieved in such a creative play with objects was an exhibition staged at The Victoria and Albert Museum in their theatre and performance galleries, "Music Hall: Sickert and the Three Graces" in the winter of 2014-2015. It was based on the paintings of the artist Walter Sickert who painted images of the Victorian Music Hall during the late 19th century and Fin de Siècle. This was accompanied by a multi-screen performance of Tanika Gupta's specially produced play, *The Boy I*

[357] Clarke, Paul (2013) p.363
[358] Hodgdon, Barbara (2016) p.7

Love (directed by Katie Mitchell), which takes its name from George Ware's celebrated music hall song, *The Boy I Love is Up in the Gallery*. Alistair Smart, for *The Telegraph*, describes it thus:

> It tells the tale of a 90-year-old woman with dementia checking into a nursing home, and we witness her struggling to remember what flashbacks duly reveal: that she and her two sisters were once part of a popular music-hall act called The Three Graces. Lights in the gallery duly dim, as the film cuts back to the trio in action in their pomp, and we – like the subjects of Sickert's paintings – play the part of the audience.[359]

The exhibition was held in a black box projection gallery and the screening was done on fragmented and variously sized digital projections onto the surrounding walls. Some of the shots were of the camera panning round a nursing home room adorned with all the objects that the protagonist had brought with her to her new lodgings, a piano, some photographs, make-up boxes and hair brushes, all seemingly actual objects from the V&A archive. There were also Sickert's paintings on the walls, reminding the audience/visitors of the inspiration for this piece and the setting within the exhibition of his actual works beyond the room they stood in. As the woman in the film touches the objects they prompt flashbacks to a reconstruction of a Music Hall dressing room where she and her sisters prepared to go on stage as a young woman, again surrounded by ephemera of the Music Hall age. The V&A advertise the exhibition:

> This multi-sensory display combines Sickert's paintings and sketches, comic caricatures, and illustrated Victorian song sheets alongside theatrical performance, music and projection in the form of a specially commissioned theatre piece […] Walter Sickert's paintings of the Music Hall and its patrons are examined as a catalyst for unveiling a lost genre and its turbulent social milieu.[360]

In order to create discourse on this "lost genre" the most poignant element of this exhibition are the layers of meaning that can be deduced from it.

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[359] Music Hall: Sickert and the Three Graces 2014
http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/art/artreviews/10061565/Walter-Sickert-and theThree-Graces-at-VandA-review.html

[360] Music Hall: Sickert and the Three Graces 2014
http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/t/touring-theatre-and-performanceexhibitions/

On the one hand we have the V&A's archive collection of original paintings by Sickert: with this we have Sickert's perspective on the contemporary behaviours of the audiences of the late 19th century Music Hall. We also see the faces of the audiences reflecting their own response to the performance. Sickert used the placement of mirrors and other reflective surfaces in his paintings to double the perspective of the figures he painted and often reflected a small depiction of the action on stage so we can see what the audience is responding to and their proximity to the action. Sickert often depicted the top gallery or standing space ('the gods') of Music Halls (specifically the Bedford in this collection) so musing on the conditions and behaviours of the poorer ticket holders, an aspect rarely seen at the time by art collectors or enthusiasts.

We then have the film performance of the writing by Tanika Gupta, as translated by director, Katie Mitchell: This included a creative narrative by Gupta inspired by the Sickert paintings (that were on loan to the V&A) and the general collections at the V&A theatre and performance archive relating to Music Hall. Katie Mitchell's directorial interpretation of Gupta's writing (Mitchell is a director known for multi-perspectival and technological scenography) are one more layer of perception. This film included footage of the actual objects of interest and inspiration which then acted as backdrop props for the filmed production. On top of this there is the actors' conception of the writing and direction in conjunction with actual objects from collections and the theatrical depiction of actual figures of the late 19th century Music Hall: The Three Graces. Within the writing and direction there are flashbacks that suggest the transportative powers of touching objects of historical or personal significance that are imbued with memories.

Within the creative historical narrative there are further analyses to be made: When the main character of the 90-year-old woman who is placed in a nursing home with her memorabilia around her, her memory and association with them seem to fail her somewhat and the objects seem obsolete after her flashbacks are completed. This is commentary on what happens to objects when they are taken out of their original (pre-collected) context; much like the character of the old woman, who used to be a Music Hall performer, is out of her original context and in a dreary nursing home. This inspires the question:

is she now a relic like the objects she contemplates? What is her memory, here embedded documentation, her anecdote, worth historiographically?

The exhibition is also up for loan to other organisations:

> We have a diverse and ever-evolving programme of touring exhibitions organised by V&A curators. Exhibitions are organised in a flexible format and are adaptable for many spaces. Since 2008, Theatre and Performance touring exhibitions have attracted over one million visitors in galleries, museums, and performance venues throughout the UK and overseas.[361]

Thus, we can expect many more visitors and researchers to contemplate this exhibition, the mutability of the histories conceived from this format are unquantifiable but nonetheless important, particularly in terms of generating access to materials and ideas among non-academic audiences. The palimpsestic nature of the layers of discourse and meaning in this exhibition came from the dis-membering and re-membering process of taking research from theatre and performance collections and disseminating ideas through modern exhibition narrative that is self-aware and discursive of different kinds of performativity involved in historiography.

If we return again briefly to the source subject of this exhibition, the Walter Sickert paintings, we can now ask: Did Sickert possess the power to make a 'truer' version of scenes in the Music Hall? How staged were the paintings? Do the subjects know they are being watched? Are they themselves performing? How much is painted from memory? It also bares the question, when the song *The Boy I Love Is Up In The Gallery* was originally written and sung were they referring to an appeal to the poorer audience members? Was there a correlation between Sickert's study of The Three Graces and the paintings of the boys in the gallery seats? These are only the most basic questions that arose from my own subjective experience of the exhibition, walking through and around the projections and the displayed artefacts, listening to the music hall numbers and the chatter of the film's script being played throughout. Leading us only to imagine the further possibilities for historical interrogation from the

[361] Theatre and Performance Touring Exhibitions for Hire
http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/t/touring-theatre-and-performance-exhibitions/

varying visitors/audiences of this performative dissemination of historical ideas. Exhibition allows one to reflect on the finer details of historical perception; once we have comprehended the myriad layers we can read between the gaps.

The Victoria and Albert Museum Performance and Theatre Archive is the largest of its kind in the UK and obtains the wealth of funding for their heritage collections despite the performing arts being a generally difficult arena to raise money for, particularly when it comes to education. There was also funding for a one-day conference to be put on as part of the opening of the Sickert and Music Hall exhibition which included talks from leading scholar in women's history, Professor Jacky Bratton and in gender and 19th century theatre, Professor Jim Davis, as well as others of note. This is an example of how an institution can disseminate ideas and inspire new thinking if the resources are available.

Section Two

Re-orientating our trajectories: encouraging new thinking with collections

Performative Museology

In the science, study or practice of organizing, arranging, and managing museums it is quickly clear that there is only a small step to elements of performativity: from narratology, literacies, pedagogy and visual culture, the general ontology of the subjects seems interrelational in many ways. On the subject of what he calls "object lessons" John Pedro Schwartz locates the museum historically since the nineteenth century as "one of the foremost sites for teaching and learning by visual means."[362] The museum is a space, place and concept that has been inspiring and offering different ways to acquire knowledge to the public, away from the textbook and the reader. The museum is theatre like in that its "visual meaning-making is both image-and object-based"[363] and exhibition is both traditional in its form and technique and a place for progression and development in ways of seeing and beholding. Requiring research from archives, creative curation of displays and requiring an audience, the museum offers a location for new mechanisms and approaches to materials for learning and research. There are particular frameworks that have been embodied in the museum exhibition throughout history: accompanying texts like captions, brochures, wall texts, catalogues and display technology like taxidermy, walls, vitrines and dioramas. Then there has been the inclusion of photography, video and audio, changing the entire installation process but the narrative tools remain open to our experimentation: sequence, height, light, combinations, layout and design and the use of overall architecture. As a place where the researcher and curator creatively imagines their perceived narrative from the artefacts available to them they are also ideological arenas for rhetoric, "through their ordered display objects make arguments"[364]. Both performance and exhibition require bodies, objects and location. Sharon Macdonald almost conjures ritualistic imagery from her discussion of museums, but more aptly, it reminds one also of the theatrical: "their authoritative and legitimizing status, their roles as symbols of community, their 'sitedness', the

[362] Schwartz, John Pedro (2009) p.27
[363] Ibid, p.28
[364] Ibid.

centrality of material culture, the durability and solidity of objects, the non-verbal nature of so many of their messages and the fact that audiences literally enter and move with them."[365]

Display as a medium is inherently performative. Like performance art, exhibition is always partially apprehended because it is read through individuals: "When it occurs in the presence of someone, when it is only transmitted through someone, or even through a recording machine, this performance gains repercussions in the memory of these individuals, who experience it either through the event or its documentation. For that reason, it is always mediated and fragmentary, and it is always a product of construction, either physical or not."[366] Unlike performance art, of course, its traces remain in place after the fact of individual comprehension, as an installation, but it is still temporary and still spectated in isolated instances of personal experience within a 'theatre' or arena for viewing, thinking and responding. Bearing in mind this performativity as part of the rich offering of a performative historiography in general may aid researchers and curators in finding new ways to communicate with visitors in their further contemplation and experiment with the museological tools available to them. This has been done very literally and interestingly in the Walter Sickert exhibition at the V&A. The constructions the historians, artists and creators use to build such a forum for object and image-based learning are stylistic, oratorical, linguistic and verbal, similar to the rhetoric of any lesson, seminar, lecture or talk. Exhibition can inform, persuade or motivate particular audiences to specific situations but more than anything else, inspire audiences to become aware as to how they are responding and what this can mean.

It has been argued of both museums and theatres as institutions that they are overly ritualistic "an experiment that resembles traditional religious experiences. By performing the ritual of walking through the museum, the visitor is prompted to enact and thereby to internalize the values and beliefs written in the architectural script."[367] This suggests the overwhelming potential to equate ideas of civilization with

[365] Macdonald, Susan (1996)
[366] Madeira et al (2017) p.83
[367] Duncan, Carol and Alan Wallach

the state[368] to the point of museums being elite, exclusive or to reinforce social power or exclusion and belonging, i.e. colonial, much like some Derridean[369] fears of the archive. However, it could also be argued that the possibilities for development and inclusion with the materials and spaces in ones hands in the museum and with ideas of creative experimentation and social awareness of performance studies there is endless post-colonial narrative potential to be tapped into.

There are performative structures in place for both traditional and new museological ways of teaching and learning. The curator may adopt a strategy based on the social and material context of the museum using organization, purpose, medium, speaker/exhibitor and audience as well as ideas of space and place which has the potential danger to reflect or reinforce existing power relations as the architecture is linked to a colonial past and often the State. One still needs to be radical to make changes in both industries. Like performance, there is the potential for variability and variety of artistic approaches in museums though still bounded by the disciplinary borders and procedures of practices of preservation. Both are deconstructable as modes of communication. Schwartz sees the malleability cultural and historical narratives through museum exhibition and display as the means to "compose", "discompose" and "recompose" according to one's own "discourses and desires", suggesting that exhibition, like performance "can be 'read' and held up to scrutiny"[370]. The audience enters and moves with the messages that are being composed and so exhibition is a "spatial mode of meaning as much as a visual one."[371] The museum space has been considered a mechanism of social control by many theorists including Mieke Bal[372], Susan Bennett[373], Tony Bennett[374], Donna Haraway[375] and Michel Foucault[376] who expose its ongoing potential for use of colonial power relations as a discursive space open to the public. In order to avoid this, visitors or audiences need to be offered a choice of further resources and

[368] Schartz, John Pedro (2009) p.33
[369] Derrida
[370] Schwartz, John Pedro (2009) p.29
[371] Ibid, p.33
[372] Bal, Mieke (2001)
[373] Bennett, Susan (2013) p.76
[374] Bennett, Tony (1995)
[375] Haraway, Donna (1985) p.23
[376] Foucault, Michel (2002)

be invited to exercise some autonomy across varying points of view. Susan Bennett's conclusive words in her book *Theatre and Museum* are: "visitor experience needs to be calibrated across a range of contexts and beyond rigidly separate disciplinary accounts."[377]

This is where the methodological fleshpoint of performance and archive theory can be helpful. As a performative space and medium that utilizes ideas, narrative storytelling, material and the body, the museum exhibition is uniquely similar as a creative historical art to performance as an embodied form of knowing. Jane Blocker investigates cultural appropriation in the history telling of museum exhibitions and how it is not necessary since the museum exhibition medium lends itself so seamlessly to the performative, "performance and the body constitute unique epistemologies that might be radically or generatively deployed against hegemonic ways of knowing." [378] In this way, for both performance and the exhibition one thing does not always have to stand in for another thing: objects can be unique, their provenance can be unique and the way they are displayed can be unique in and of itself, as performative entities present in space and time. Exhibition as re-enactment: a new performance prompted by the existence of other performance. As Rebecca Schneider reminds us, "remains do not have to be isolated to the document, to the object, to bone versus flesh." The flesh is important in history forming, as important as the bones, the primary, durable, fundamental synecdochic materials need oral tradition, testimonies and witnesses, anecdote and other embodied stories to be relevant. In this respect, the re-enactments of exhibitions are not "dead issue" they are acts of survival[379]. The collector can be the historical source for this narratological flesh in the performance of history and they must come through as such in exhibition to give archival material human credence and relatability. Archival material, Schneider says, "may be a critical mode of remaining, as well as a mode of remaining critical."[380] Much like Sam Alberti's suggestion that objects are "polysemic" they have multi-meanings because the "distances over which they travelled and the different audiences that behold them provokes

[377] Bennett, Susan (2013) p.77
[378] Blocker, Jane (2009) p.54
[379] Schneider, Rebecca (2007) p.7
[380] Ibid.

constant reinterpretations"[381] much like bodies. In memory, in material remains and in practices the exhibition can be at once theorizing, materialization, experimentation: what Madeira, Salazar and Marcel call the "knowledge triangle"[382]. These are all embodied actions and while preservation is key to archival history this can also be prolonged and emboldened by curatorial practices: exhibition can be that act of survival.

Effects on Archival Ontology

In contrast the archive is seen as a place where the bones are housed not the flesh. Yet it is actually the place where all this performance begins. As documentation is performative, so is the place that houses it and, as mentioned in chapter two, beyond the perceived institutional politics of the archive, those of the collector before. The archive is the location for reconstruction and evocation of the past and the researcher, archivist and curator are what Schlesinger calls "stewards of this storehouse of knowledge, gatekeepers in their unavoidably subjective interpretation of records"[383]. He goes on to remind us of the dangers of limiting archival histories to the job of these in house "stewards" asking, are they "unintentionally misleading in their organizational schemes and finding aids?" A question that may make us think about how important outsider information and interpretation is for histories to remain dynamic. This then also leads us to the larger questions about the construct of "history": "Who gets to tell it?". Thinking liberally, anyone should 'get to tell it' but access is limited to the institutions for various wider political and in-house practical reasons.[384] This is why an exhibition space is so important to an archive. The University of Bristol Theatre Collection uses all of its available space for exhibiting material that resides within their archives, there needs to be that visual and object based imagery to communicate alongside the text and theory. Amelia Jones says, "while the experience of viewing a photograph and reading a text is clearly different from that of sitting in a small room watching an artist

[381] Alberti, Sam (2005) p.571
[382] Madeira, Salazar and Marcel (2017) p.92
[383] Schlesinger, Kenneth (2008) p.4
[384] Public oral history projects have for this reason become very important and have gained popularity, for example, OutStories Bristol[384] is a Bristol based LGBT+ oral history project that has gathered local stories on the experiences of identifying as LGBT+ and living in Bristol over the decades. The project has also encouraged research in local record offices and libraries amongst people who are part of this group whose histories are often marginalised or silenced.

perform, neither has a privileged relationship to the historical 'truth' of the performance."[385] Performance documentation and thus history is formed by collaborative memory from collection to exhibition, whatever format that takes.

We see in the Women's Theatre Collection that much of the starting point of this collection was from The Feminist Archive which they quoted as having started in one person's attic and expanding through collaborative effort to becoming too large even for space on Bath University campus and then ultimately their fixed premises in Old Market. Eventually the ephemera dispersed to larger collections like the University of Bristol Theatre Collection. By talking and sharing findings on women's theatre and performance these objects were given the exposure that they needed/deserved to expand into something visible, prominent and thus open to meaning making/history. Risks needed to be taken and material needed to have that literal movement that collections can have to help communicate the polysemy of the objects that Alberti talks about. In *The Queer Art of Failure,* Judith Halberstam refers to the possibilities of this kind of openness to ideas as tempting failure and finding dynamism: "open means questioning, open to unpredictable outcomes, not fixed on a telos, unsure, adaptable, shifting, flexible, and adjustable. An 'open' pedagogy […] also detaches itself from prescriptive methods, fixed logics, and epistemes, and it orients us toward problem-solving knowledge or social visions of radical justice."[386] Collecting, sharing and research through this "undisclosed zone of knowledge production"[387], experimentation with the subjective stories that objects can impart beyond what is usually prescribed, is what allowed the Women's Theatre Collection to emerge and expand, allowed the contents to be artificially taken on as in-house projects by various archivists, curators, cataloguers, historians, artists and researchers.

From the core analyses of this thesis, I glean that embracing "failure"[388] is what can allow us to open up our minds and actions to experiment with what can be done and seen beyond the prescriptive ideals

[385] Jones, Amelia (1997) p.11
[386] Halberstam, Judith (2011) p.16
[387] Ibid, p.18
[388] Halberstam, Judith (2011) p.6

for history, archive and performance. Getting it wrong, finding omissions, looking beyond success and achievement and towards the imperfections of human behavior have been central to the application of this methodology. Halberstam equates the omission of the significance of failure in scholarly research to a conventional desire to be taken seriously in academia:

> Being taken seriously means missing out on the chance to be frivolous, promiscuous and irrelevant. The desire to be taken seriously is precisely what compels people to follow the tried and true paths of knowledge production around which I would like to map a few detours. Indeed terms like serious and rigorous tend to be code words, in academia as well as other contexts, for disciplinary correctness; they signal a form of training and learning that confirms what is already known according to approved methods of knowing, but they do not allow for visionary insights of flights of fancy.[389]

Halberstam looks towards the queering of conceptions of history, time, art and experience. This thesis asks for new thinking that experiments with the idea of "failure": the potential failure to supply scientific evidence in anecdote, potential failure for one's history writing to be deemed academically rigorous, the failure to guarantee traditional use of sources. These are freedoms afforded the performance and theatre researcher through awareness of the communicative and receptive body in play and experiment with ideas and processes of acquiring knowledges. Freeman calls this kind of historical research "Erotohistoriography" which she says finds its way through embracing creativity and fiction in history:

> Erotohistoriography admits that contact with historical materials can be precipitated by particular bodily dispositions, and that these connections may elicit bodily responses, even pleasurable ones that are themselves a form of understanding. It sees the body as a method, and historical consciousness as something intimately involved with corporeal sensations.[390]

Freeman refers to the libidinal comprehension of the world around us in imagery and action with particular reference to works of fiction but her connecting drive between the body and experience and creativity and history are what is important here. Pleasure, curiosity, passion, delight, contentment and interest have been the underplayed emotions that root the majority of collectors in their causes and Freeman knows that “haptic historiography”[391] is what invites viscerality, which inspires interest, which encourages change (unique vision), which can lead to broader access and response.

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[389] Ibid.
[390] Freeman, Elizabeth (2010) p.95-6
[391] Ibid, p.123

Theatre and performance collections represent the immediate impact that *ideas* of theatre and history can have on objects and vice versa. There are already layers of implied meaning surrounding the collected status of objects. There is then the loaded intellectual state in which historians enter archival research that can be prohibitive to an understanding of the mutability of history when beholding objects. We must consider the need of visitors, students and audiences to relate to historical objects, to feel familiar, to feel included, to feel relevant to history in order to comprehend it fully. By way of both primary interaction with objects and dissemination of devised narratives, exhibition display can not only allow the movement of the body around objects offering varied perspectives but can guide us through the subjective creation that the researcher has deciphered from materials. We remember from action and not just vision and sensorial reception. As we walk through or are guided amongst archival material we have the luxury of time and space to contemplate what we are looking at and with that, why, and most importantly how we are responding in order to contextualise collection material for us. The re-production of these chosen collection objects to tell stories is enough to promote ideas to visitors or audiences but is it enough to produce further historical output? What is the quantitative and qualitative outcome of exhibition narratives? Perhaps the first-hand engagement with objects is necessary to really be able to glean potential histories from collections and to transmit the human ideas and experiences behind them to future generations.

Conclusion

In the exploration of the performance of collecting, archiving and research, through the performances that we impose on objects to speak for us about history, the awareness of different kinds of narrative relationships between bodies and objects in time has been brought to the forefront. From Baudelaire and Adorno to Perry and Hedstrom and King, the human imperfections of anecdote are what constitute the subjectivity of evidence in the reading of history through archival objects. We perform collecting and research as much as we perform every other meaning –making act in the everyday and exhibition has served as a practical example of how this can explore potential impact of collections and creative interpretations. Questioning ‘who gets to tell history?’ opens archival research up to inviting more

visibility by embracing the power of subjectivity in the endeavor to "make a statement"[392], create "visual language"[393] and shape social discourse.

In chapter two the thesis looked at the body as the last taboo in archival research looking at Dannehl's idea of surface to surface interaction as "magical"[394] ingress to the positivity of the phenomenological relationship between collector – object – researcher and contemplated the danger of this and the feeling of loss of control or fear and anxiety, the "delirium" of Steedman's knowing what to archive and what not to which, in her book, *Dust*[395], borders on what she thinks is real 'archive fever'. The ebb and flow of this exploration continues with potential damage that the too literal use of the body in proximity with objects in wear, touch and play can do for conservation issues. These are levels of choice, "levels of criticism"[396] in archival research whether to interpret from the visceral notion of ingestion and the senses or the more intellectual encounter, being with objects or having some level of "haptic historiography"[397] to encourage a transportative effect in the imagination, or all three is up to the researcher.

Exhibition then offers itself as the middle ground answer to fulfilling the performative potential of the archive collection for open access and interpretation but keep distance as standardized format. Does distance in display equal distance in the comprehension of history? Perhaps embracing the dynamism of objects, being seen, used and displayed encourages cataloguing and thus further access and so is enough. Any interest generated could be seen as positive. Once access is gained we must think about how we are going to let the objects speak for us by analysing our approaches – re-membering and avoiding prescription.

> In the performing arts a proactive approach seems to be necessary owing to the temporal and dynamic characteristics of theatre and performance. Besides being proactive, performing arts archivists are engaged in promoting the use

[392] Hedstrom and King (2004) p.24
[393] Grayson, Perry (2011) p.68
[394] Dannehl, Karin (2009) p.123
[395] Baudrillard, Jean (1994) p.10
[396] Veyne, Paul (1984) p.17
[397] Freeman, Elizabeth (2010) p.123

of the materials they manage; "the archive has to be alive,"[398]

From the conceived methodology in chapter two where we see varying stylistic approaches to historical writing with objects through collections, to the phenomenological model of the reciprocal relationship between collector, object and researcher in archival studies in chapter three, through to the processes of challenging and questioning the ritual acts in generating and disseminating ideas through collections discussed in chapter four; a distinctively performative historiography emerges. As Marini suggests, in her article, "Performing Arts Archives: Dynamic Entities Complementing and Supporting Scholarship and Creativity", by raising awareness in this way to the corporeal, personal and humanist rooting of our imaginative comprehension of objects and engaging the senses in research to keep archive collections "alive"[399] we can thus improve access to resources.

Marini draws our attention to the epistemological correlation between text, object, body and context as a critically analytical approach afforded historians by the academic discourse of theatre and performance studies itself. Marini maintains that performance is what should define any archive so that it avoids becoming "dead issue". The collector and researcher both 'perform' processes of ritualised historiographical practice acting as performer, writer, audience and reader. It is also a modality that has no immediate barriers to cross disciplinary utilization: the collector, researcher, object triangulation could be transposed neatly onto any subject from science to geography. Play with objects[400] (within the conservationist ethic of the archive) is necessary not only to invite researchers in to archives but to engage them in creating inspiring histories from them.

The agenda of this thesis has been to open up contemplation and discourse on forgotten or fading histories exacerbated by outdated rigidity of practices and dissemination of findings from which "multiple contexts are rarely acknowledged"[401]. A consideration of potential circumstances of the

[398] Marini, Francesca (2008) p.9
[399] Ibid.
[400] Pearce, Susan (1993) p.51
[401] Dannehl, Karin (2009) p.128

collector/s in their collecting process has provided an access point for these contexts within the practiced research methodology. Museology and the study of exhibition design and curation has helped to re-focus our attentions as historical researchers on what is being fed to us and what we need to look for, effectively, how to fully read and write histories through collected objects.

> A museum's exhibition cases are sometimes little more than well-structured storage rooms, and even the most meticulously assembled period room – for all its verisimilitude – do not remove the need to reflect on this additional layer of context. This new context, in which the researcher finds the object, posits its own challenges. This means that many of the proposed models of studying material culture, at least in part because they tacitly assume but do not overtly stress context, struggle to address the fundamental problem of classification. Similarly, the challenges of multiple contexts are rarely acknowledged, and there is no model aiding a systematic approach. So context, yes – but which one?[402]

In order to access these resources however, archives have a struggle with bridging the gap between private and public. For context: The University of Bristol Theatre Collection is situated within the University of Bristol's Theatre Department and as a location it promises easy access for students and is in a central position for visitors either booked in or walking in from the street. Met with a small museum display space downstairs which leads one up to more wall-hanging displays upstairs in the reading room, it is a space for bodies to walk through, around and congregate in. This contrived movement around and through the archival objects highlights the corporeality of the practices of history research, bringing together concepts of spirit and body to strengthen the argument for an unwritten understanding between the characters of researcher, collector, and object. Each acts as unique curator of its own histories, a concept that could be utilised to direct researchers back towards the handling and comprehension of physical artefacts which they may previously have perceived as the dust and drudgery of archival research**.** However, we must question the practical element of space here. The University of Bristol Theatre Collection is dependent on University, HEFCE (Higher Education Funding Council for England) and private funding and donations and the reading room is a shared space for study, research, volunteer work and classes, the necessary movement and play that I posit as a fruitful mode of body-object interaction here is dependent on space as it is for all archives. The museum and display element around archives holds the majority of responsibility for engagement, outside of having space to sit,

[402] Ibid, p.127-8

stand and move around found objects from collections. This also leads to questions of how objects are obtained for researchers. Volunteers and staff within archives must have a wealth of knowledge of what is in the collection boxes beyond the catalogued or uncatalogued in order for visitors and researchers to have that first point of contact with items of interest. This implements a collective sleuthing process before one is even able to conduct such a practical research methodology.

Museums rarely encourage lateral thinking. The UoBTC, for example, has a Facebook page on which they post an 'Object of the Month' with a short but detailed description of it, a virtual display to entice people to curiosity about their collections. However, it is important to question who has access to this Facebook page. In short: anyone, but it would only be known by those already interested however, the ability to 'share' posts on this social networking site has the potential to open this up. The constant crossing back and forth of archive collections between exclusive and inclusive, private and public is on-going but this must be continuously addressed and weighed up to make sure that the collections remain appealing and the institution is using its potential to appeal. There are often small labels to material exhibitions in the department, there are receptions and openings and discussions about collections where a few objects are chosen to be observed by an invited public audience, but there is rarely mention of the collector, who they were, what they did, why the object is there which would encourage a more personalised, emotional interest in collections and begin the processing of complex histories.

There is a culture of forgetting in University archival studies that comes from choosing for the specificity of an institutional curriculum. Discussion on exhibitions is imperative in questioning different formats in this potential 'economy of loss' or what Schneider calls “trace-logic emphasizing loss – a loss the archive can regulate, maintain and institutionalise – forgetting that it is loss the archive produces.”[403] It is important for exhibitions to give answers as to why objects were collected to encourage recurring interest in subjects to feel familiar to the personal, human motive behind the

[403] Schneider, Rebecca (2007) p.103

seemingly, at first, random presence of objects. The visitor has momentary intellectual and spiritual ownership of objects in exhibition as they read and comprehend them as individual things within a wider narrative context as the exhibition can re-enact the 'presence' of staging. It is an inherently interpretive approach encouraging people to question, what am I looking at and how am I looking at it? Schwartz believes museum exhibition is concerned with prompting visitors to ask "how such looking is constructed"[404] and in this way it appeals to the human individual and their own contextual circumstances, "it empowers them to effect changes in the worldview in which both they and the museum are already participating."[405]

Away from the European epistemes of archives and museums, the individual that does not relate to this canonical world must be catered for, appealed to, targeted, invited to contribute to the elaboration of collections or histories otherwise it will remain derivative and unchallenging and audiences will feel their archival heritage does not belong to them. In a world where technological advancement is rapid and access to knowledge is broadening, the archive must engage with cultural shifts or get left behind. Embracing ideas of change and imagination for three dimensional artefacts in the direct usage of them in research encourages 'communication under any circumstances' aligning history through the archive with the ethos of storytelling in its quantitative, qualitative, immediacy, efficiency and persistence of dissemination. The idea, be it digital or otherwise, is to create, gain and re-write knowledge through productive dialogues between teachers, artists, scholars and archivists. SIBMAS (Société Internationale des Bibliothèques et des Musées des Arts du Spectacle) and TLA (Theatre Library Association) have been running cooperative conferences and events in France, Britain, US and this year Denmark on collecting, archives, collections, museums, exhibitions and the theatre and performance arts which have offered global perspectives on new ways of accessing, utilising, teaching and disseminating ideas through these invaluable institutions. A promising move towards new thinking on archival research for the arts and histories. It was mentioned at the New York University conference of June 2014 that beyond the conceivable benefits of virtual technology there is always going to be a necessity for a

[404] Schwartz, John Pedro (2009) p.29
[405] Ibid, p.43

'methodological flesh point' for archival interaction: a corporeal awareness of the physical action in research inspiring and inspired by the theory. In their 2017 work Marcel, Salazar and Madeira call for a single place, a "triad", as they call it, of the "University-Museum-Theatre"[406]. Historicity is a term that will always be questioned when dealing with the development and stretching of archival documentation to its fullest, be this through hands on use or digital transfer. An anxiety over the mention of the body and the imagination in historical study is still present.

Introduced in the opening quote to chapter one, Glynne Wickham made what could have been perceived a rather radical statement in 1954 on the importance of imagination over the intellect in archival research and theatre and performance history. The controversy of this has been a guiding force for this entire research project and an appropriate one, since Wickham founded the first Drama Department in the UK and, within it, the University of Bristol Theatre Collection. The introduction of the necessity for "vision" and "spirit"[407] over what was ordinarily considered scholarly rigidity of intellectuality prompted my investigation into how far we can go with this phenomenological idea without losing touch of what is relevant and useful in academia. Vince was similarly inspired by this 'spirit', what may have seemed frivolous in Wickham's statement as the leading scholar in the country on drama, theatre and performance studies, inspired him to go on: "the history of human inquiry is replete with discoveries, insights, and truths that depend upon exactly such processes. Guess, intuition, serendipity, vision – call them what we will, they are all products of the human mind, unfettered either by consciousness or by artificial logic."[408] A propelling argument that served as the foundation of my motive towards investigating new thinking in archival research. Chapter three demonstrated that "vision" is personal to all collectors, who have starkly different ways, means and agendas for collecting and the outcome can be tangibly read in the way the Desperate Men, Eric Jones Evans, Arnold Ridley, the women of the Women's Theatre Collection and the Tree Family approached their own histories with objects.

[406] Madeira, Salazar and Marcel (2017) p.92
[407] Wickham, Glynne (1954) p.307
[408] Vince, R.W. (1986) p.13

This thesis has been about *finding a new way*: a new way to read archive collections, to encourage visitors to engage with exhibitions, to get researchers to behold material resources for history writing, finding a new way to encourage researchers to comprehend the human experience of the collectors in their collecting practices, to relate to these collector's choices by understanding one's own choices in the interpretation of objects and thus how we employ objects to culturally and personal perform for us. It has been about embracing the imperfections and failures of history writing through archives from the past, the present and the future. It seeks to remind us that we can validate subjectivity in the way we encounter evidence, by exploring our unique perception through an awareness of the body's response to objects as informed by the senses, exploring our unique perception through an awareness of the intellect's response to objects based on our personal associations to our own experiences in the world socially and artistically and locating ourselves amongst other thinkers by inciting self-interrogation and comparison through making ourselves "visible"[409] in the text of our own findings. It asks us to "make a statement"[410], to accept our imaginative "vision"[411] at work in the deciphering of all meaning as these are all human inevitabilities. The human condition and how it responds to its environment is what is important in history making. The next thing to do would be to implement it further and attempt to discover if this methodology sheds light on the collector as a main under-considered source of contextual information for all and to quantify the effects this has on access in the appeal to the human element of history writing through the archive.

Entering into intense and varied archival research using paper-based and three-dimensional objects allowed me to discuss in detail some less frequently accessed resources compared to digital archives. The contribution made here has been instigating performance studies as a background school of thought for opening ideas for different kinds of access to resources through theory and practice and has allowed me to investigate the spectrum of openness that is considered or not considered in historiography as a way to address problems of access; encouraging inclusive and broad thinking with archives. The regret

[409] Bromfield and Cavanagh (2009) p.9
[410] Bal, Mieke (1994) p.98
[411] Wickham, Glynne (1954) p.307

is that this approach has been limited by time and required length of project so that a cross-comparison of other archives and their practices or across disciplines using could not be made using this methodology which would certainly lead to some interesting and important findings. It would also be an interesting experiment to make a detailed cross-comparison between three dimensional and digital archive collections but for this project, not only would this have taken valuable air time away from the under-considered elements of the archive but would be a vast and sprawling separate project. A more obtainable goal would be to apply the methodology to a series of focus groups of people who do not access the archive resources regularly or at all as this would offer a quantifiable set of data that would improve the aim and design of the methodology and see further outcomes to the framing of my own practice, which is really what the objective of this thesis is leading to. This would offer the opportunity to promote the design of exhibition as an invaluable means of historical communication and an appropriately performative one to the way in which histories are formed through collections using creativity and imagination. Inviting the reading and writing of theatre history through and not from objects utilizing their relation to the human element of the collector and the potential reasons for personal responses to them and the affect they have on historiographical outcomes is imperative to the archival dynamism that would inspire greater and broader access and response. Without time and project length restrictions, this could be a very valuable investigation to undergo in the future.

> In reality, our goals are the same. We all love theatre and performance for its live quality and its cultural, political, and social meaning. No one is interested in turning theatre into a fixed, immutable entity. Performing arts archives make it possible to preserve the memory of artists, movements, and performances. Archivists want this memory to stay alive and be used for new creations […] The archive has to be alive; it has to be an entity active for everybody […] If its existence is not known, if it does not coexist with the city, the people, the scholars ... it is a dead archive. And theatre cannot be a dead issue: on the contrary, it has to make people understand everything that is out there, convey the possibility to do and discover things.[412]

[412] Marini, Francesca (2008) p.11

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